

THE
ANARCHY
OF THE
RANTERS,
And other LIBERTINES;
THE
HIERARCHY
OF THE
ROMANISTS,
AND OTHER

Pretended CHURCHES, equally refused and re-
futed, in a two-fold *Apology* for the Church
and People of God, called in Derision, *Quakers*.

WHEREIN

they are vindicated from those that accuse them of *Disorder* and *Confu-
sion* on the one Hand, and from such as calumniate them with *Tyranny*
and *Imposition* on the other; shewing, that as the true and pure *Prin-
ciples* of the Gospel are restored by their Testimony; so is also the an-
cient *Apostolick ORDER* of the Church of Christ re-established among
them, and settled upon its right *Basis* and *Foundation*.

By ROBERT BARCLAY.

11. 2. 3. Let nothing be done through *strife* or *vain Glory*; but in *Lowli-
ness of Mind* let each esteem other better than themselves.
13. 7. Remember them that have the Rule over you, who have spoken
unto you the Word of God, whose Faith follow.

PHILADELPHIA:

Re-printed by JOSEPH CRUKSHANK,
MDCCLXX.



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P R E F A C E

TO THE

R E A D E R.

SUCH is the Malignity of Man's Nature in his fallen State, and so averse is he from walking in the straight and even Path of TRUTH, that at every Turn he is inclinable to lean either to the Right-hand or to the Left; yea, such as by the Work of God's Grace in their Hearts, and powerful Operation of his Spirit, have obtained an Entrance in this Way, are daily molested, and set upon, on all Hands; some striving to draw them the one Way, some the other: And if through the Power of God they be kept faithful and stable then are they calumniated on both Sides; each likening or comparing them to the Worst of their Enemies.

Those that are acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, may observe this to be the Lot of the Saints in all Ages; but especially those, whose Place it hath been to reform and restore the Ruins of the House of God, when decayed: Hence those that set about repairing of the Walls of Jerusalem, were necessitated to work with the one Hand, and defend with the other.

Christ is accused of the Jews as a Samaritan; and by the Samaritans quarrelled with for being a Jew. The Apostle Paul is whipped and imprisoned by the Gentiles, and upbraided with being a Jew, and teaching their Customs; the same Paul is hawled, and ready to be killed by the Jews, for breaking the Law, and defiling the Temple with the Gentiles. The like hath
also

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also befallen these faithful Witnesses and Messengers, whom God has raised up in this Day to witness for his Truth, which hath long been in a great Measure hid; but now is again revealed, and many brought to be Witnesses of it, who thereby are come to walk in the Light of the Lord.

This People thus gathered, have not wanted those Trials, that usually accompany the Church of Christ, both on the Right-hand and on the Left, each characterizing them in such Terms, as they have judged would prove most to their Disadvantage. From whence (as the Testimony of the false Witnesses against our Lord did not agree, neither do these against us) some will have us to be foolish mad Creatures; others to be deep, subtil Politicians; * some to be illiterate, ig-

* John Owen charges us with so much ignorance, that though he writes against us in Latin, he fears we will not understand it. And Thomas Danson about the same time accuses us of being Jesuits, sent from abroad under this Vizard.

norant Fellows; others to be learned, cunning Jesuits, under a meer Vizard: Divers Professors will have us to be only Pensioners of the Pope, undoubtedly Papists; but the Papists abhor us as Hereticks: Sometimes we are a disorderly, confused Rabble, leaving every one to do as they list, against all good Order and Government; at other Times we are so much for Order, as we admit not Men to exercise the Liberty of their own Judgments. Thus are our Reputations tossed by the envy of our Adversaries; which yet cannot but have this Effect upon sober minded People, as to see

what MALICE works against us; and how these Men, by their contradictory Assertions concerning us, save us the Pains, while they refute one another.

True it is, we have laboured to walk amidst these Extremities; and upon our appearing for the Truth,

we

The P R E F A C E to the Reader.

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we have found Things good in themselves abused on both Hands : for such hath always been the Work of an Apostacy, to keep up the Shadow of certain Truths ; that there-through they might shelter other Evils. Thus the Jews made use of the Law and the Prophets to vindicate their Abuses ; yea, and to crucify Christ : And how much many Christians abuse the Scriptures and the Traditions of the Apostles, to uphold Things quite contrary to them, will in the general be readily acknowledged by most.

But to descend more particularly ; There be two Things especially, both of which in their primitive Use were appointed ; and did very much contribute towards the Edification of the Church : The one is,

The Power and Authority, which the Apostles had given them of Christ, for I. the gathering, building up, and governing of his Church ; by Virtue of which Power and Authority they also wrote the Holy Scriptures.

The other is, That Privilege given to every Christian under the Gospel, to II. be led and guided by the Spirit of Christ, and to be taught thereof in all Things.

Now, both these in the Primitive-Church wrought effectually towards the same End of Edification ; and did (as in their Nature they may, and in their Use they ought to do) in a good Harmony very well consist together : But by the Workings of Satan, and Perverseness of Men, they are made to fight against and destroy one another. For on the one Hand the Authority and Power, that resided in the Apostles, while it is annexed and entailed to an outward Ordination and Succession of Teachers, is made Use of to cloak and cover all Manner of Abuses, even the Height of Idolatry and Superstition. For by Virtue of this Succession

Succession these Men claiming the like Infallibility, that was in the Apostles (though they be Strangers to any inward Work or Manifestation of the Spirit in their Hearts) will needs oblige all others to acquiesce and agree to their Conclusions, however different from, or contrary to, the Truths of the Gospel; and yet for any to call such Conclusions in Question, or examine them, is no less than a heinous Heresy, deserving Death, &c. Or while the Revelation of God's Mind is wholly bound up to these Things already delivered in the Scriptures (as if God had spoke his last Words there to his People) we are put with our*

* So saith James Durham, a noted Man among the Presbyterians, in his Exposition upon the Revelations.

own natural Understandings to debate about the Meanings of them, and forced to interpret them, not as they plainly speak, but according to the Analogy of a certain Faith made by Men, not so much contrived to answer the Scriptures, as the Scriptures are strained to vindicate it; which to doubt of, is also counted Here-

sy, deserving no less than Ejection out of our native Country, and to be robbed of the common Aid our Nativity entitles us to. And on this Hand, we may boldly say, both Papists and Protestants have greatly gone aside.

On the other Hand, some are so great Pretenders to inward Motions and Revelations of the Spirit, that there are no Extravagancies so wild, which they will not cloak with them; and so much are they for every One's following their own Mind, as can admit of no Christian Fellowship and Community, nor of that good Order and Discipline, which the Church of Christ never was, nor can be without. This gives an open Door to all Libertinism, and brings great Reproach to the Christian Faith. And on this Hand have foully fallen the German Anabaptists, so called, John of Leyden,

The P R E F A C E to the Reader. vii

Leyden, Knipperdolling, &c. (in Case these monstrous Things committed by them be such as they are related) and some more moderate of that Kind have been found among the People in England, called Ranters: As it is true, the People called Quakers have been branded with both of these Extreame; it is as true, it hath been and is their Work to avoid them; and to be found in that even and good Path of the Primitive-Church, where all were (no Doubt) led and acted by the Holy Spirit; and might all have prophesied one by one; and yet there was a Subjection of the Prophets to the Spirits of the Prophets. There was an Authority some had in the Church, and yet it was for Edification, and not for Destruction: There was an Obedience in the Lord to such as were set over; and a being taught by such, and yet a knowing of the inward Anointing, by which each Individual was to be led into all Truth. The Work and Testimony the Lord hath given us, is to restore this again, and to set both these in their right Place, without causing them to destroy one another. To manifest how this is accomplished, and accomplishing among us, is the Business of this Treatise; which, I hope, will give some Satisfaction to Men of sober Judgments, and impartial and unprejudicate Spirits; and may be made useful in the good Hand of the Lord, to confirm and establish Friends against their present Opposers; which is mainly intended, and earnestly prayed for, by

Robert Barclay.

The 17th of the 8th
Month, 1674.

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THE
ANARCHY
OF THE
RANTERS, &c.

SECTION I.

The Introduction and Method of this Treatise.

AFTER that the Lord God in his own appointed Time had seen meet to put an End to the Dispensation of the Law, which was delivered to the Children of *Israel*, by the Ministry of *Moses*; through and by whom he did communicate unto them in the Wilderness from Mount *Sinai*, divers Commandments, Ordinances, Appointments and Observations, according as they are testified in the Writings of the Law; it pleased him to send his own Son the Lord Jesus Christ in the Fulness of Time; who having perfectly fulfilled the Law, and the Righteousness thereof, gave Witness to the Dispensation of the Gospel. And having approved himself, and the Excellency of his Doctrine, by

The End of the Law and Beginning of the Gospel Dispensation recited.

2 *The Anarchy of the Ranters, &c.* Sect. I.

many great and wonderful Signs and Miracles, he sealed it with his Blood; and triumphing over Death (of which it was impossible for him to be held) He cherished and encouraged his despised Witnesses, who had believed in him, in that he appeared to them, after he was raised from the Dead; comforting them with the Hope and Assurance of the *pouring forth of his Spirit*, by which they were to be led and ordered in all Things; in and by which, He was to be with them to the End of the World, not suffering the Gates of Hell to prevail against them. By which Spirit come upon them, they being filled, were emboldned to preach the Gospel without Fear; and, in a short Time, Thousands were added to the Church; and the Multitude of them that believed, were of one Heart, and of one Soul, and great Love and Zeal prevailed, and there was nothing lacking for a Season.

But all that were caught in the Net, did not prove good and wholesome Fish; some were again to be cast into that Ocean, from whence they were drawn: Of those many that were called, all proved not chosen Vessels, fit for the Master's Use; and of all that were brought into the great Supper and Marriage of the King's Son, there were that were found without the Wedding-Garment.---- Some made a shew for a Season, and afterwards fell away; there were that drew back; there were that made Shipwreck of Faith, and of a good Conscience: There were not only such as did backslide themselves, but sought to draw others

The divers Sorts
of them that
were called in
the Apostles
Days.

others into the same Perdition with themselves, seeking to overturn their Faith also; yea, there were that brought in damnable Heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them. And also of those Members that became not wholly corrupt (for some were never again restored by Repentance) there were that were weak, and sickly, and young; some were to be fed with Milk, and not with strong Meat; some were to be purged, when the old Leaven received any Place; and some to be cut off for a Season, to be shut out (as it were) of the Camp for a Time, until their Leprosy was healed, and then to be received in again.

Moreover, as to *Outwards*, there was the Care of the Poor, of the Widow, of the Fatherless, of the Strangers, &c. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Body, the Church (for the Church is the Body of Christ, and the Saints are the several Members of that Body) knowing in his infinite Wisdom, what was needful for the good ordering and disposing all Things in their proper Place, and for preserving and keeping all Things in their right Station, did, in the Dispensation and Communication of his Holy Spirit, minister unto every Member, a *Measure of the same Spirit*, yet diverse according to Operation, for the Edification of the Body; some Apostles, some Teachers, some Pastors, some Elders: There are old Men, there are young Men, there are Babes. For all are not Apostles, neither are all Elders, neither are all Babes; yet are all Members: And as such,

The Order in
the Church
of God in the
Outward.

all have a Sense and Feeling of the Life of the Body, which from the Head, flows unto all the Body, *as the Ointment of Aaron's Beard, unto the Skirts of his Garment*: And every Member has its Place and Station in the Body, so long as it keeps in the Life of the Body; and all have need one of another; yet is no Member to assume another Place in the Body, than God has given it; nor yet to grudge or repine its fellow Member's Place; but to be content with its own; For the uncomely Parts are no less needful than the comely; and the less honourable than the more honourable; which the Apostle Paul holds forth in 1 Cor. 12. from Verse 13 to 30.

The Ground
of Rents and
Divisions.

Now the Ground of all Schisms, Divisions or Rents in the Body is, when as any Member assumes another Place than is allotted it; or being gone from the Life and Unity of the Body, and losing the Sense of it, lets in the Murmur, the Eye that watches for Evil, and not in holy Care over its Fellow Members: And then, instead of coming down to *Judgment in itself*, will stand up and *judge its Fellow Members*, yea, the whole Body, or those whom God has set in a more honourable and eminent Place in the Body than itself. Such suffer not the Word of Exhortation; and term the Reproofs of Instruction (which is the Way of Life) *Imposition and Oppression*, and are not aware how far they are in the Things they condemn others for; while they spare not to reprove and revile all their Fellow Members: Yet if they be but admonished

monished themselves, they cry out, as if their great Charter of Gospel Liberty were broken.

Now though such, and the Spirit by which they are acted, be sufficiently seen and felt by Thousands, whose Hearts God has so established, as they are out of Danger of being intangled in that Snare, and who have Power and Strength in themselves to judge that Spirit, even in its most subtil Appearances; yet there are, who cannot so well withstand the Subtilty, and seeming Sincerity some such pretend to, though in Measure they have a Sight of them; and others, that cannot so rightly distinguish between the Precious and the Vile; and some there are that through Weakness, and want of true Discerning, may be deceived, and the Simplicity in them betrayed for a Season; as it is written, *With fair Speeches and smooth Words, they deceive the Hearts of the Simple.*

The Subtilty
of that Spirit.

Therefore having, according to my Measure, received an Opening in my Understanding as to these Things, from the Light of the Lord, and having been for some Time under the weighty Sense of them, I find at this Instant a Freedom to commit them to Writing, for the more universal Benefit and Edification of the Church of Christ.

Now for the more plain and clear Opening and Understanding of these Things, it is fit to sum up this Treatise in these following general Heads, to be considered of:

The Heads
treated of,
viz.

6 *The Anarchy of the Ranters, &c.* Sect. II.

- I. First, *From whence the Ground and Cause of this Controversy is, the Rise and Root of it?*
 - II. Secondly, *Whether there be now any Order and Government in the Church of Christ?*
 - III. Thirdly, *What is the Order and Government which we plead for? In what Cases, and how far it may extend? In whom the Power decisive is, and how it differeth? And is wholly another, than the oppressing and persecuting Principality of the Church of Rome, and other Antichristian Assemblies.*
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SECTION II.

*Concerning the Ground and Cause of this CON-
TROVERSY.*

*The first Dawn-
ing of the heav-
ly Day of the
Lord described.*

WHEN as the Lord God by his mighty Power began to visit the Nations with the Dawning of his heavenly Day (for thus I write unto those that have received and believed the Truth) and that he sent forth his Instruments, whom he had fitted and prepared for his Work, having fashioned them not according to the Wisdom and Will of Man, but to his own heavenly Wisdom and Counsel, they went forth and preached the Gospel in the Evidence and Demonstration of the Spirit: Not in the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom; but in Appearance

*And break-
ing forth.*

ance as Fools and Mad, to those that judged according to Man. But their Words and Testimony pierced through into the inner Man in the Heart, and reached to that of God in the Conscience; whereby as many as were simple-hearted, and waited for the Redemption of their Souls, received them as the Messengers of the most high God; and their Words were unto them, not as the Words of Men, but as the Words of God; for in the receiving and embracing the Testimony of Truth through them, they felt their Souls eased, and the acceptable Day began to dawn in and upon them.

Now what Evidence brought these Men to make their Testimony to be received? Did they entice? Did they flatter? Did they daub up? Did they preach Liberty to the Flesh or Will of Man? Nay verily, they used no such Method: Their Words were as Thunder-Bolts, knocking down all that stood in their Way, and pouring down the Judgment of God upon the Head of the Transgressor every where. Did they spare the zealous Professor more than the open Profane? Nay verily, they condemned equally the Hypocrisy of the one, as well as the Profanity of the other; yet wanted they not Regard to the tender Seed and Plant of God in either. Did they give way? Did they yield to the Wisdom of Man? To the Deceitfulness of the Serpent, that would reason Truth for themselves, saying, *I must stay until I be convinced of this, and that, and the other Thing; I see not yet this to be wrong, or the other Thing to be my Duty?* How did they knock down this Manner of Reasoning by the Spirit of God, which

8 *The Anarchy of the Ranters, &c.* Sect. II.

wrought mightily in them, shewing and holding forth, that this is the Day of the Lord that is dawning; that all are invited to come; that none ought to tarry behind; that that which so pleadeth is the same Spirit which of old Time said in those that were invited, *I cannot come yet, I must first marry a Wife; I must go prove my Yoke of Oxen; I must go visit my Possessions; let me first bury my dead Father.* Did not the Lord through them testify and declare against these Things? And is there not a Cloud of Witnesses, who felt the Enemy thus reasoning to keep us in the Forms, Fellowships, false Worship, and foolish Fashions, of this World? But we felt, as we were obedient, all these Things to be for Condemnation; and that, as we obeyed the pure Manifestation of the Light of Jesus in our Hearts, there was no Hesitation. We might and should have parted with all those Things at the First; and what occasioned such Scruples, was but that which drew back, through being unwilling to give pure Obedience to the Cross of Christ: For as many as gave Obedience and believed in the Light, found no Occasion of stumbling; but such as believed not were condemned already, because they believed

The Courage
of the Mes-
sengers.

not in him that appeared. Now the Boldness, and Courage, and Efficacy of these Messengers Testimony, wrought such Astonishment, Fear and Amazement in the Hearts of such as were ingenuous, that many began to be inwardly pricked, as in the Days of old, and the Foundations of many began to be shaken; and some that were asleep were awakened, and many that

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that were dead and buried in the Graves of Sin, and Formality, and Superstition, and Idolatry of all Sorts, were alarmed; and many were brought in from the Hedges, and the High-Ways, and the Truth was received by Thousands with great Cheerfulness, and a Readiness of Mind: And the Feet of those were beheld to be beautiful upon the Mountains, that brought the glad Tidings of these good Things. And great Lowliness and Simplicity of Heart was upon such that were newly convinced of the Truth, and deep Humiliation of Spirit, and Subjection to the Power, both in themselves, and in those who were over them in the Lord, and had gathered them into the Truth.

But as it was in the Gatherings of old, so it also fell out in this Day; all kept not their first Love: As among those Thousands, which Moses led out of Egypt, and carried through the Red Sea, who had sung Praises to God upon the Banks of Salvation, many Carcasses fell in the Wilderness; some who murmured and longed to return again to the Flesh-Pots of Egypt; and some for opposing and contradicting the Servant, and Servants of the Lord, whom the Lord

Opposition
and—

had made Use of to lead them out of Bondage, in saying, *Ye take too much upon you; Hath the Lord indeed only spoken by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?* And as among these Multitudes which were gathered by the Apostles, there were many who continued not faithful to the End; some returned back again with the Sow to the Puddle after they were washed; some embraced the present World; some again separated themselves, being sensual, and without the

---Separation
entering.

Spirit,

Spirit, *despising Dominions, and speaking Evil of Dignities*; their Mouths speaking great swelling Words, being puffed up, and not abiding in these Things, which they were taught of the Apostles: So it is to be lamented, that among these many Thousands, whom the Apostles and Evangelists whom God raised up in *This Day* (for the gathering of his Seed and People out of spiritual *Egypt* and *Babylon* into his pure Light and Life) did bring forth and gather, there are that have fallen upon the Right-hand and the Left. Some are turned back again into *Egypt*, running into the same Excess of Lust and Riot, from whence they were once purified and redeemed: Some could not bear the Reproach of the Cross of Christ; and were by and anon offended in him: Some could not bear the Tribulations, sufferings and Persecutions, which came for the Truth's Sake; and the Seed in them was soon scorched with the Heat of the Day. And some not abiding in Subjection to the Truth in themselves, were not contented with that Place and Station in the Body, which God had placed them in; but became vainly puffed up in their fleshly Minds, intruding into those Things which they had not seen: And would needs be *Innovators*,

Innovators
causing Di-
visions.

given to Change, and introducing new Doctrines and Practices, not only differing, but contrary to what was already delivered in the Beginning; making Parties, causing Divisions and Rents stumbling the Weak, and denying, despising and reviling the Apostles and Messengers of Christ, the Elders of the Church, who loved not their Lives unto Death, but through much Care, and

Travel

Travel, and Watchings, and Whippings, and Bonds, and Beatings, in daily Jeopardy, gathered us by the mighty Power of God into the most precious Truth. Yet in all this there hath nothing befallen us, but that which hath been the antient Lot of the Church of Christ in the primitive Times.

Now He, that was careful for his Church and People in old Times, hath not been wanting to us in our Day; but as he has again restored the Truth unto its primitive Integrity and Simplicity, and as he has delivered our Understandings from these false Doctrines and Principles, which prevailed in the Apostacy; so he hath not gathered us to be *As Sheep scattered without a Shepherd*, that every one may run his own Way, and every one follow his own Will, and so to be as a confused Mass or Chaos, without any Order; but He, even the *LORD* hath also gathered, and is gathering us into the *good Order, Discipline, and Government of his own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ*: Therefore he hath laid Care upon some beyond others, *who watch for the Souls of their Brethren, as they that must give Account*.

There are then Fathers that have begotten us unto Christ Jesus through the Gospel, of whom we ought to be Followers, and to remember their Ways, which be in Christ. There are then Fathers and Children, Instructors and Instructed, Elders and young Men, yea, and Babes; there are that cannot cease, but must exhort, instruct, reprove, condemn, judge;

The good Shepherd of Israel's Care over his Church and People.

The several Stations in the Church.
1 Cor. 4. 15.
16, 17.

or else, for what End gave Christ the Gifts mentioned, *Ephes. 4. 11, 12*? And how are the Saints perfected, and the Body of Christ edified of those, who came under the Cognizance, and, as it were, the Test of this Order and Government? I may chiefly sum them up in three Sorts (though there be divers other little subdivided Species of them.)

1. Prophane
Backsliding
Apostates.

The First is, *Those that turn openly back to the World again*, through finding the Way of Truth too narrow.

These have not been capable to do us any considerable Hurt; for being a Salt, that has lost its Savour, they mostly prove a Stink among those to whom they go. And I never knew any of them, that proved any ways steady among those to whom they go. I find other Professors make but small Boast of any Profelytes they got out from among us; I hear little of their proving Champions for the Principles of others against us. And, indeed, for the most Part they lose all Religion with the Truth: For I have heard some of them say; *That if ever they took on them to be religious, they would come back again to the Quakers, &c.*

2. Unwary
repenting
Sinners.

Secondly, Those, who through Unwatchfulness, the secret Corruption of their own Hearts, and the mysterious or hidden Temptations of the Enemy, have fallen into his Snares; and so have come under the Power of some Temptation or other, either of fleshly Lusts, or of spiritual Wickedness: Who being seasonably warned by those that keep their Habitation, and faithful Overseers

seers in the Church ; have been again restored by unfeigned Repentance : Not kicking against the Pricks ; but have rejoiced, that others watched over them for their Good, and are become Monuments of God's Mercy unto this Day.

Thirdly, Such, who being departed from their first Love and antient Zeal for the Truth, become cold and lukewarm ; and yet are ashamed to make open Apostacy, and to turn back again, so as to deny all the Principles of Truth, they having had already such Evidence of Clearness upon their Understanding : Yet not keeping low in their own Habitations, but being puffed up, and giving way to the restless Imaginations of their exalted and wandering Minds, fall out with their Brethren ; cause Divisions ; begin to find fault with every Thing, and to look at others more than at themselves ; with swelling Words to talk of, and preach up, a higher Dispensation, while they are far from living up to the Life and Perfection of this present ; like unto such who said, *We will not have this Man to rule over us* : Cry out of Formality and Apostacy, because they are not followed in all Things ; and if they be reproved for their Unruliness, according to the good Order of the Church of Christ, then they cry out, *Breach of Liberty, Oppression, Persecution ! we will have none of your Order and Government ; we are taught to follow the Light in our Consciences, and not the Orders of Men*. Well, of this hereafter ; but this gave the Rise of this Controversy : Which leads me to that which I proposed in the Second Place.

3. Self-Separating troublesome Opposers.

SECTION III.

Whether there be now to be any Order or Government in the Church of Christ.

IN Answer to this *Proposition*, I meddle not at this time with those that deny any such thing as a Church of Christ; I have reserved their Plea to another Place. Neither need I to be at much Pains to prove the Affirmative, to wit, *That there ought to be Government and Order in the Church of Christ* unto the Generality of our Opposers, both *Papists* and *Protestants*; who readily confess and acknowledge it, and have heretofore blamed us for want of it. Tho' now some of them, and that of the highest Pretenders, are become so unreasonable, as to accuse us for the Use of it; improving it, so far as they can, to our Disadvantage: For such is the Blindness of partial Envy, that whereas the supposed Want of it was once reckoned heretical, now the present Performance of it is counted criminal.

These, then, to whom I come to prove this Thing, are such, who having cast off the Yoke of the Cross of Christ in themselves, refuse all *Subjection* or *Government*: Denying that any such Thing ought to be, as disagreeing with the Testimony of Truth: Or those, who not being so wilful and obstinate in their Minds, yet are fearful or scrupulous in the Matter, in respect of the dangerous Consequences, they may apprehend, such a Thing may draw after it.

For

For the clearing then as well the Mistakes of the one, as answering the Cavils of the other, I judge the Truth of these following Assertions will sufficiently prove the Matter; which I shall make no great Difficulty to evidence.

First, *That Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, did appoint and ordain, that there should be Order and Government in it.* Reason I.

Secondly, *That the Apostles and primitive Christians, when they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and immediately led by the Spirit of God, did practise and commend it.* II.

Thirdly, *That the same Occasion and Necessity now occurring, which gave them Opportunity to exercise that Authority, the Church of Christ hath the same Power now as ever, and are led by the same Spirit into the same Practices.* III.

As to the First, I know there are some, that the very Name of a Church, and the very Words, Order and Government they are afraid of. Now this I suppose hath proceeded, because of the great Hypocrisy, Deceit and Oppression, that hath been cloaked with the Pretence of these Things; but why should the

The Abuse makes not void the true Use.

Truth be neglected, because Hypocrites have pretended to it? Theright Institution of these Things, which have been appointed and ordained of God, must not, nor ought not to be despised, because corrupt Men have abused and perverted them. I know not any Thing that hath been more abused and perverted in the whole World, than the Name of a Christian; shall we then renounce that honourable Title, because so many Thousands

fands of wicked Men, yea, Antichrists have fallſly assumed it to themselves? The Man of Sin hath taken upon him to sit in the Temple of God, as God; yet we must not therefore deny, *that God is in this Temple.* If the Synagogue of Satan assumed the Name of the Church of Christ, and hath termed her Oppression and Violence, the Power and Authority thereof; therefore must not the Church of Christ, and its Authority, be exercised, where it truly is according to his Mind? This I prefix to warn all to beware of stumbling at Things which are innocent in themselves; and that we may labour to hold the steady even Path of Truth, without running into either of the Extreams. For that Jesus Christ did appoint Order and Government to be in the Church, is very clear from his plain Words, *Matt.*

Church Order
appointed by
Christ, & the
Form thereof.

Chap. 18. Ver. 15. Moreover, if thy Brother shall trespass against thee, go tell him his Fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother. Ver. 16. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the Mouth of two or three Witnesses, every Word may be established. Ver. 17. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: But if he neglect to hear the Church let him be unto thee as an Heathen-Man, and a Publican. Ver. 18. Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven. From which Scripture it I doth manifestly and evidently follow, First, That Jesus Christ intended there should be

be certain Order and Method in his Church, in the Procedure towards such as transgress. *Secondly*, That he that refuseth to hear two, is become more guilty (as hardened) than in refusing to hear him that first reprov'd alone. *Thirdly*, That refusing to hear the Judgment of the Church, or whole Assembly, he doth thereby exclude himself, and shut out himself from being a Member; and is justly judged, by his Brethren, as an Heathen and a Publican.

And *Lastly*, that the Church, Gathering or Assembly of God's People, has Power to examine and call to Account such, as appearing to be among them, or owning the same Faith with them, do transgress; and in case of their refusing to hear, or repent, to exclude them from their Fellowship: And that God hath a special Regard to the Judgment and Sense of his People thus orderly proceeding, so as to hold such bound in Heaven, whom they bind on Earth, and such loosed in Heaven, whom they loose on Earth. I am partly confident, that no rational Man will deny, but that these naturally follow from the above-mentioned Scripture; and if there should be any found so unreasonable as to deny it, I could prove it by necessary and unavoidable Consequences; which at present, as taking it for granted, I forbear to do. If it be reckoned so great a Crime to offend one of the little Ones, that it were better for him, that so do, that a Millstone were hanged about his Neck, and he were drowned in the Depth of the Sea; without Question, to offend and gainsay the whole Flock, must be more

18 *The Anarchy of the Ranters, &c.* Sect. III.
criminal, and must draw after it a far deeper
Judgment.

Now if there were no Order nor Government
in the Church, what should become
of those that transgress? How
should they be again restored?

The End of
Church-Order.

Would not this make all Reproving,
all Instructing, all Caring for, and Watching
over one another, void and null? Why should
Christ have desired them to proceed after this
Method? Why doth he place so much Weight
upon the Judgment of the Church, as to make
the refusing of hearing it, to draw so deep a
Censure after it; which he will not have to fol-
low the refusing to hear one or two a-part,
though the Matter be one and the same? And
so, as to the substantial and intrinsic Truth of
the Thing, there lies the same Obligation upon
the Transgressor to hear that one, as well as all;
for that one adviseth him to that which is right
and good, as well as the whole; and they do but
homologate or confirm that which that one
hath already asserted: Yet Jesus Christ, who is
the Author of Order, and not of Confusion, will
not have a Brother cut off, or reputed a *Publican*,
for refusing to hear one or two, but for refusing
to hear the Church. And if it be

Objection.

objected, *That the Church of Rome,*
and all other false Churches, make use
of this Scripture, and cover their Persecution, and
Cruelty, and Oppression by it; and thou sayest no
more than they say. I Answer; I suppose no
Man will be so unreasonable as to affirm, that
the Church of *Rome* abusing this Scripture, will
make

make it false in itself ; but how we differ in our Application of this Scripture, shall be spoken of hereafter. I am not now claiming Right to this Power, as due to us (that is reserved for another Place ;) but this, I say, is that which I now aver to be manifest from the Scripture-Testimony, and to be in itself an unquestionable Truth, *That Jesus Christ intended there should be Order and Government in his Church ;* which is the Thing at present in Hand to be proved : Which if it be so really true (as it cannot be denied) then I hope it will also necessarily follow, that such who really and truly are the Church of Christ, have Right to exercise this Order and Government.

Secondly, That the Apostles and Primitive-Christians, did practise Order and Government, we need but read the History of the *Acts*, of which I shall mention a few pregnant and undeniable Testimonies, as we may observe in the very first Chapter of the *Acts*, from Verse 13.

Reason II.
Church Order
practised by the
Apostles & primitive
Christians.---In Elections.

to the End, where at the very first Meeting the Apostles and Brethren held together after the Ascension of Christ, they began orderly to *appoint one* to supply the Place of *Judas* ; it may be thought, this was a needless Ceremony ; yet we see how the Lord countenanced it. I hope none will say, that the Apostles appointing of these two Men, or him, upon whom the Lot did not fall, contradicted their inward Freedom, or imposed upon it ; but both agreed very well together ; the one in the Will and Movings of

God in appointing, and the other in the same, in submitting to their Appointment.

Moreover, after they had received the Holy Ghost, you may read, *Acts* 6. so soon as there was an Opportunity, how they wisely gave Order, concerning the Distribution for the Poor, and appointed some Men for that Purpose. So

—in Distribu-
tions for the
Poor

here was Order and Government, according to the present Necessity of the Case: And the Lord God was well pleased with it, and the Word of God increased, and the Number of the Disciples multiplied in *Jerusalem* greatly. Might they not have said then, as some say now; *We will give our Charity to whom we see Cause; and we will take no Notice of your Appointments and Orders: Whether would God have approved of such, yea, or nay?*

Thirdly, When that the Business of Circumcision fell in, whether it was fit or not to circumcise the *Gentiles*? We see, the Apostles saw not meet, *To suffer every one to follow their own Minds and Wills*: They did not judge, as one confusedly supposeth, *That this Difference in an out-*

W. M. in his
Queries.

ward Exercise, would commend the Unity of the true Faith: Nay they took another Method. It is said expressly, *Acts* 15. 6. *And the Apostles and Elders came together, to consider of this Matter; and after there had been much disputing about it* (no doubt then there were here Diversities of

—in Differences
occurring.

Opinions and Judgments) the Apostles and Elders told their Judgments, and came also to a positive

positive Conclusion. Sure some behoved to submit, else they should never have agreed. So those that were the Elders, gave a positive Judgment; and they were bold to say, *That it pleased not only them but the Holy Ghost.* By all which it doth undeniably appear, that the Apostles, and primitive Saints, practised a Holy Order and Government among themselves: And I hope none will be so bold as to say, they did these Things without the Leadings of the Spirit of God, and his Power and Authority concurring, and going along with them.

And that these Things were not only singular Practices, but that they held it doctrinally; that is to say, it was Doctrine which they preached; that there ought to be Order and Government in the Church, is manifest from these following Testimonies,

The Apostles
Doctrine concerning
Order
in the Church.

1 Cor. 4. 15, 16, 17. (15.) *For though you have Ten Thousand Instructors in Christ; yet have ye not many Fathers: For in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the Gospel.* (16.) *Wherefore I beseech you, be ye Followers of me.* (17.) *For this Cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved Son, and faithful in the Lord; who shall bring you into Remembrance of my Ways, which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every Church.* Here the Apostle Paul is very absolute: First, In that he desires them to be Followers of him. Secondly, In that he sends a Teacher, yea, a Minister, and eminent Bishop, or Overseer of the Church, for to put them in Mind of his Ways, which be in Christ,

1 Cor. 4, 15.
16, 17.

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as he taught in every Church. No doubt there were Apostates, and dissenting Spirits in the Church of *Corinth*, that gave *Paul* occasion thus to write, as he testifies in the Beginning of the Chapter, how he was judged by some of them; he shews, how they were grown high; Verse 8. *Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as Kings without us, &c.* Might not these Dissenters of the Church of *Corinth*, have reasoned thus against *Paul*? Did not this *Paul* teach us, at first, to mind the *Measure of Grace in ourselves*, and follow that? (for

Dissenting Reasonings against Church-Government.

no doubt that was *Paul's* Doctrine) But now he begins to Lord it over us, and tells us, we must be *Followers of him*. Might they not have judged the Beloved *Timothy* to be far out of his Place? Might they not have said, It seems it is not God that moved thee, and sent thee here by his Spirit; but lordly *Paul*, that seeks Dominion over our Faith: It seems thou comest not here to preach Christ, and wish us to be Followers of him, and of his Grace in our Hearts; but to mind us to follow *Paul's* Ways, and take notice, how he teaches in every Church: We are not concerned with him, nor with his Messenger, nor with any of your Orders, and so forth. Doth not this run very plausible? I question not but there was such a Reasoning among the Apostate *Corinthians*; let such as are of the same Kind among us examine seriously, and measure their Spirits truly hereby. Yea, he goes yet further in the following Chapter, Verses

Verfes 3, 4. Verfe 3. *As absent in Body, but present in Spirit, I have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done the Deed.* Verfe 4. *In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my Spirit with the Power of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* Would not one think this to have been a very presumptuous Word? And yet who dare offer to condemn it? From all which, I shall shortly observe, that it seems it was judged no *Inconsistency* nor *Contradiction*, to be *Followers of the Grace in themselves, to be perswaded in their own Hearts, and also to be Followers of the Apostle Paul, and of his Ways*; because his Ways and Example was no other than the Spirit of God in themselves would have led them to, if they had been obedient: Therefore he found it needful to charge them positively to *follow him*, without adding this Reason.

1 Cor. 5. 3--13.
The Power of
giving Judgment in the
Church.---

Next, the great Argument the Apostle uses to perswade them hereunto, upon which he mainly insists, because he had begotten them into the Truth; *Ye have not many Fathers; for in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the Gospel: Wherefore I beseech you, be ye Followers of me.* So he makes that as the Cause; which the same Apostle also in his Exhortation with the *Galatians*, putting them in mind how he preached the Gospel to them at first, and Chap. 4. Ver. 15. *Where is then the Blessedness ye speak of? For I bear you Record, if possible ye would*

-As of Fathers.

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have plucked out your own Eyes, and given them unto me. We see then, that the Lord hath, and

-And Overseers.

doth give such, whom he hath furnished, and sent forth to gather a People unto himself, Care and Oversight over that People; yea and a certain Authority in the Power over them to bring them back to their Duty, when they stray at any Time; and to appoint, yea, and *command* such Things as are needful for *Peace, and Order, and*

Unity's Sake: And that there lies an *Obligation* upon such as are so gathered, to *reverence, honour, yea, and obey* such as are set over them in the Lord. For, saith the same Apostle, 2 Cor. 2. 9. *For to this End also did I write, that I might know the Proof of you, whether you be obedient in all Things*: And Chap. 7. Ver. 13. 15. *Yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the Joy of Titus, because his Spirit was refreshed by you all.* Ver. 15.

Betrayings of the Enemy.

And his inward Affection is more abundant towards you, whilst he remembreth the Obedience of you all, how with Fear and Trembling ye received him.

Now this will not at all infer, as if they have been implicitly led of old: Or that such, having the same Authority to exercise it now sought Dominion over their Brethren's *FAITH* or to force them to do any Thing beyond, far less contrary to, what the Lord leads us to by his Spirit: But we know (as they did of old) that the Enemy lies near to *BETRAY* under such Pretences. And seeing, in case of Difference

the Lord hath, and doth, and will reveal his Will to his People, and hath, and doth raise up Members of his Body, to whom he gives a Discerning, and Power, and Authority to instruct, reprove, yea, and command in some Cases, those that are faithful and low in their Minds, keeping their own Places, and minding the Lord, and the Interest and Good of his *Truth* in the general over all, shut out the Murmurer; and the Spirit of God leads them to have Unity, and concur with their Brethren. But such as are heady and high-minded, are inwardly vexed, that any should lead or rule, but themselves: And so it is the high Thing in themselves, that makes them quarrel with others for taking so much upon them; pretending a Liberty, not sinking down in the Seed to be willing to be of no Reputation for its Sake. Such, rather than give up their own Wills, will study to make Rents and Divisions, not sparing the Flock; but prostrating the Reputation and Honour of the Truth even to the World, minister to them an Occasion of Scorn and Laughter, to the hardening them in their Wickedness and Atheism.

The Murmurer shut out.

The Honour of Truth prostrated by Divisions.

Besides these Scriptures mentioned, I shall set down a few of many more that might be instanced to the same Purpose.

Ephes. 5. 21. *Submitting yourselves one to another in the Fear of God.*

Scriptures for Submission & Lowliness of Mind; and Esteem of the Brethren.

Phil. 2. 3. *Let nothing be done through Strife or vain Glory, but*

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in Lowliness of Mind, let each esteem other better
than themselves.

Verse 29. Receive him therefore in the Lord
with all Gladness, and hold such in Reputation.

And 3. 17. Brethren, be Followers together of
me; and mark them which walk so, as ye have us
for an Ensample.

And 4. 9. Those Things, which ye have both
learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do;
and the God of Peace shall be with you.

Col. 2. 5. For though I be absent in the Flesh,
yet am I with you in the Spirit, joying and beholding
your Order, and the Stedfastness of your Faith in
Christ.

1 Theff. 5. 12. And we beseech you, Brethren, to
know them which labour among you, and are over
you in the Lord, and admonish you.

Verse 13. And to esteem them very highly in
Love, for their Work's Sake; and be at Peace among
yourselves.

Verse 14. Now we exhort you Brethren, warn
them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, sup-
port the weak, be patient toward all Men,

2 Theff. 2. 15. Therefore, Brethren, stand fast,
and hold the Traditions which you have been taught,
whether by Word, or our Epistle.

2. Cor. 10. 8. For though I should boast some
what more of our Authority (which the Lord hath
given us for Edification, and not for your Destruc-
tion) I should not be ashamed.

Now though the Papists greatly abuse this
Place, as if hereby they could justify that Mass of
Superstition, which they have heaped together;
yet except we will deny the plain Scripture,
we

we must needs believe, there lay an Obligation upon the *Thessalonians* to observe and hold these Appointments, and no Doubt, needful Institutions, which by the Apostles were recommended unto them: And yet who will say, that they ought, or were thereby commanded to do any Thing contrary to that which the Grace of God in their Hearts moved them to?

2 Theff. 3. 4. *And we have Confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do, and will do the Things which we command you.*

Verse 6. *Now we command you, Brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Tradition which he received of us.*

What more positive than this? and yet the Apostle was not here an Imposer. And yet further, Verse

The Authority of the Church, no Imposition.

14. *And if any Man obey not our Word by this Epistle, note that Man, and have no Company with him, that he may be ashamed.*

Thus, Heb. 13. 7. *Remember them which have the Rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose Faith follow; considering the End of their Conversation.*

Verse 17. *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give Account: That they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief; for that is unprofitable for you.*

Jude 8. *Likewise also these filthy Dreamers defile the Flesh, despise Dominion, and speak Evil of Dignities.*

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I might at length enlarge if needful, upon these Passages, any of which is sufficient to prove the Matter in Hand; but that what is said may satisfy such as are not wilfully blind and obstinate. For there can be nothing more plain from

The primitive
Christians practised
Order in the
Church.

these Testimonies, than that the *antient Apostles and primitive Christians practised Order and Government in the Church*; that some did appoint and ordain certain Things; condemn and approve certain Practices, as well as Doctrines, by the Spirit of God: That there lay an Obligation in Point of Duty upon others to obey and submit: That this was no Encroachment nor Imposition upon their Christian Liberty; nor any ways contradictory to their being inwardly and immediately led by the Spirit of God in their Hearts: And lastly, That such, as are in the true Feeling and Sense, will find it, their Places to obey, and be one with the Church of Christ in such like Cases: And that it is such as have lost their Sense and Feeling of the Life of the Body, that dissent, and are disobedient, under the false Pretence of Liberty. So that thus it is sufficiently proved what I undertook in this Place.

Thirdly, I judge there will need no Reason III. great Arguments to prove the People of God may, and do well to exercise the like Government upon the very like Occasion. For even Reason may teach us, that what proved good and wholesome Cures to the Distemper of the Church in former Ages, will not now (the very like Distempers falling in) prove hurtful and

and poisonable; especially, if we have the Testimony of the same Spirit in our Hearts; not only allowing us, but commanding us so to do. It is manifest (though we are sorry for it) that the same Occasions now fall in; we find that there are that have eaten and drunken with us at the Table of the Lord, and have been Sharers of the same spiritual Joy and Consolation, that afterwards fall away. We find (to our great Grief) that some walk disorderly; and some are puffed up, and strive to sow Division, labouring to stumble the Weak, and to cause Offences in the Church of Christ: What then is more suitable, and more Christian, than to follow the Foot-steps of the Flock, and to labour and travel for the Good of the Church, and for the removing all that is hurtful; even as the Holy Apostles, who walked with Jesus, did before us? If there be such that walk disorderly now, must not they be admonished, rebuked and withdrawn from, as well as of old? Or is such to be the Condition of the Church in these latter Times, that all Iniquity must go unreprieved? Must it be Heresy, or Oppression, to watch over one another, in Love? To take Care for the Poor? To see that there be no corrupt, no defiled Members of the Body, and carefully and christianly deal with them, for restoring them, if possible; and for withdrawing from them, if incurable? I am perswaded, that there are none that look upon the Commands of Christ and his Apostles, the Practice and Experience of the primitive Church and Saints, as a sufficient Prece-

Distempers of
the Church re-
quire a Cure
now as of old.

Precedent to authorize a Practice now, that will deny the Lawfulness or Usefulness hereof, but must needs acknowledge the Necessity of it. But

Objection. if it be objected (as some have done) do not you deny, that the Scripture

is the adequate Rule of Faith and Manners; and that the Commands or Practices of the Scripture are not a sufficient Warrant for you now to do any Thing, without you be again authorized, and led unto it by the same Spirit? And upon that Score, do you not forbear some Things both *practised* and *commanded* by the primitive Church and Saints?

Well, I hope I have not any Thing weakened this *Objection*, but presented it in its full Vigour and Strength: To which I shall clearly and distinctly answer thus.

Times alter the Usefulness of Things commanded.

First, Seasons and Times do not alter the Nature and Substance of Things in themselves; though they may cause Things to alter, as to their Usefulness, or not Usefulness of them.

Secondly, Things commanded and practised at certain Times and Seasons fall of themselves when as the Cause and Ground, for which they were commanded, is removed, as their is no need now for the Decision about *Circumcision*, seeing there are none contend for it: Neither as to the Orders concerning Things offered to Idols, seeing there is now no such Occasion: Yet who will say, that the command enjoined in the same Place, *Acts 15. 20. To abstain from Fornication* is now made void; seeing there is daily Need for its standing in Force, because it yet remaineth

as a Temptation Man is incident to? We confess, indeed, we are against such as from the bare Letter of the Scripture (though if it were seasonable now to debate it, we find but few to deal with, whose Practices are so exactly squared) seek to uphold *Customs, Forms* or *Shadows*, when the Use, for which they were appointed, is removed or the Substance itself known and witnessed; as we have sufficiently elsewhere answered our Opposers in the Case of *Water-baptism*, and *Bread and Wine*, &c. So that the *Objection*, as to that, doth not hold; and the Difference is very wide, in respect of such Things: The very Nature and Substance of which can never be dispensed with by the People of God, so long as they are in this World; yea, without which they could not be his *People*. For the Doctrines, and fundamental Principles of the Christian Faith, we own and believe originally and principally, because they are the *Truths* of God; whereunto the Spirit of God in our Hearts hath constrained our Understandings to obey and submit. In the second Place, we are greatly confirmed, strengthened and comforted in the *joint Testimony* of our Brethren, the Apostles and Disciples of Christ, who by the Revelation of the same Spirit in the Days of old believed, and have left upon Record the same Truths; so we *having the same Spirit of Faith*, according as it is written, *I believed, and therefore have I spoken*; we also believe, and therefore we speak. And we deny not but some, that from the Letter have had the Notion of these Things,

The joint
Testimony of
the Apostles,
&c. to the
Truths of God
in our Hearts.

Things, have thereby in the Mercy of God received Occasion to have them revealed in the Life: For we freely acknowledge (though often calumniated to the contrary) that *whatsoever Things were written aforetime, were written for our Learning*; that we through Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures may have Hope. So then I hope, if the Spirit of God lead me now unto that which is good, profitable, yea, and *absolutely needful*, in order to the keeping my Conscience clear and void of Offence towards God and Man, none will be so unreasonable as to say, I ought not to do it, *because it is according to the Scriptures*. Nor do I think it will *savour ill* among any serious, solid Christians, for me to be the more confirmed and perswaded that I am led to this Thing by the Spirit, that I find it in myself good and *useful*; and that upon the like Occasions Christ commanded it, and the Apostles and primitive Christians practised and recommended it.

Now, seeing it is so that we can boldly say with a good Conscience in the Sight of God that the same Spirit, which leads us to believe the Doctrines and Principles of the Truth, and to hold and maintain them again, after the Apostacy, in their primitive and antient Purity, as they were delivered by the Apostles of Christ in the Holy Scriptures; I say, that the same Spirit doth now lead us into the like Holy Order and Government to be exercised among us, as it was among them, being now the like Occasion and Opportunity ministred to us; therefore, what can any christianly or rationally object against it? For that there is a real Cause for it, the

Thing

Thing itself speaketh ; and that it
 was the Practice of the Saints and
 Church, of old, is undeniable : What
 kind of Ground then can any such
 Opposers have (being such, as scrupling at this,
 do notwithstanding acknowledge our Principle)
 that this were done by Imposition or Imitation,
 more than the Belief of the Doctrines and Princi-
 ples ? Seeing as it is needful to use all Diligence
 to convince and perswade People of the Truth,
 and bring them to the Belief of it (which yet we
 cannot do, but as Truth moves and draws in their
 Hearts) it is also no less needful, when a People
 is gathered, to keep and preserve them in Unity
 and Love, as becomes the Church of Christ ; and
 to be careful, as saith the Apostle, *That all Things*
be done decently, and in order ; and that all that
 is wrong be removed, according to the Method
 of the Gospel ; and the Good cherished and en-
 couraged. So that we conclude, and that upon
 very good Grounds, *That there ought now, as*
well as heretofore, to be Order and Government in
the Church of Christ.

A real Cause for
the same Order.

That which now cometh to be
 examined in the third Place is,

Head III.

First, *What is the Order and Go-*
vernment we plead for ?

1.

Secondly, *In what Cases, and how*
far it may extend ? And in whom the
Power decisive is ?

2.

Thirdly, *How it differeth, and is wholly ano-*
ther than the oppressive and persecuting Principality
of the Church of Rome, and other Anti-christian
Assemblies ?

D

SECTION

SECTION IV.

Of the Order and Government which we plead for.

IT will be needful then, before I proceed to describe the *Order and Government* of the *Church*, to consider what is or may be properly understood by the *Church*: For some (as I touched before) seem to be offended, or at least afraid of the very Word; because, *The Power of the Church, the Order of the Church, the Judgment of the Church*, and such like Pretences, have been the great Weapons wherewith Antichrist and the apostate Christians have been these many Generations persecuting the Woman, and warring against the Man-child. And, indeed, great Disputes have been among the *learned Rabbies*, in the Apostacy concerning this *Church*, what it is, or what may be so accounted; which I find not my Place at present to dive much in, but shall only give the true Sense of it, according to Truth, and the Scriptures plain Testimony.

What the Word
CHURCH
signifies properly.

The Word *CHURCH* in itself, and as used in the Scriptures, is no other but a *Gathering Company*, or *Assembly of certain People, called or gathered together*: For so the Greek

Word signifies (which is that the Translators render *Church*) which Word is derived from the Verb *Evoco*, *I call out of*, from the Root *Voco*, *I call*. Now though the *English* Word *Church* be only taken in such a Sense, as People are *gathered together upon a religious Account*;

yet

yet the *Greek Word*, that is so rendered, is taken in general for every *Gathering*, or *Meeting together of People*: And therefore where it is said, *The Town Clerk of the Ephesians dismissed the Tumult, that was gathered there together*, the same *Greek Word* is used, *Acts 19. 41. he dismissed the Assembly (or the Church.)*

(*dimisit Concionem*)

A *Church*, then, in the Scripture-Phrase, is no other than a meeting or gathering of certain People, which (if it be taken in a religious Sense, as most commonly it is) are gathered together in the Belief of the same Principles, Doctrines and Points of Faith, whereby as a Body they become distinguished from others, and have a certain Relation among themselves; and a conjunct Interest to the maintaining and propagating these Principles they judge to be right: And therefore have a certain Care and Oversight over one another, to prevent and remove all Occasions that may tend to break this their conjunct Interest, hinder the Propagation of it, or bring Infamy, Contempt, or Contumely upon it; or give such as on the other Hand are, or may be banded together to undo them, just Occasion against them, to decry and defame them.

What a religious Church is.

Now the Way to distinguish that *Church, Gathering, or Assembly* of People, whereof Christ truly is the Head, from such as falsely pretend thereto, is by considering the Principles and Grounds upon which they are gathered together, the Nature of that Hierarchy and Order they have among themselves, the Way and Method

How [to distinguish the true Church from the false.

they take to uphold it, and the Bottom upon which it standeth; which will greatly contribute to clear all Mistakes.

Forasmuch as *Sanctification* and *Holiness* is the great and chief End among true Christians, which moves them to gather together; therefore the Apostle *Paul* defines the Church in his Salutation to the *Corinthians*, 1 Cor. 1. 2. *Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints.* So the Church is such as are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints.

The Power and Authority, Order and Government we speak of, is such, as a *Church Meeting, Gathering* or *Assembly* claims towards those that have, or do declare themselves Members, who own, believe and profess the same Doctrines and Principles of Faith with us, and go under the same Distinction and Denomination; whose Escapes, Faults and Errors may by our Adversaries justly be imputed to us, if not seasonably and christianly reproved, reclaimed or condemned. For we are not so foolish, as to concern ourselves with those who are not of us; far less, who stand in Opposition to us, so as to reprove, instruct, or reclaim them, as Fellow-Members or Brethren: Yet, with a Respect to remove the general Reproach from the Christian Name, with a tender Regard to the Good of their immortal Souls, for the Zeal we owe to God's Glory, and for the Exaltation and Propagation of his everlasting Truth and Gospel in the Earth, we have not been wanting, with the Hazard of

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The Church's
Care over its
Members, &c.

our Lives, to seek the scattered Ones, holding forth the living and sure Foundation, and inviting and perswading all to obey the Gospel of Christ, and to take Notice of his Reproofs, as he makes himself manifest in and by his Light in their Hearts. So our Care and Travel is, and hath been towards those that are without, that we may bring them into the Fellowship of the Saints in Light; and towards those that are brought in, that they might not be led out again, or drawn aside, either to the Left-hand, or the Right, by the Workings and Temptations of the Enemy.

These Things being thus cleared and opened, we do positively affirm, That we being *a People gathered together by the Power of God* (which most, if not all of those, that arising among ourselves do oppose us herein, have acknowledged) into the Belief of certain Principles and Doctrines, and also certain Practices and Performances, by which we are come to be separated and distinguished from others, so as to meet apart, and also to suffer deeply for our joint Testimony; there are and must of Necessity be, as in the gathering of us, so in the preserving of us while gathered, *Diversities of Gifts and Operations for the edifying of the whole Body.* Hence, saith the Apostle, *1 Tim. 5. 17. Let the Elders, that rule well, be counted worthy of double Honour, especially they who labour in the Word and Doctrine:* And this we suppose neither to be *Papish*, nor Anti-christian, let our Opposers say it as oft as they can, without reckoning the Apostles such.

Diversities of
Gifts in the
Church.

Secondly, Forasmuch as all are not called in the same Station, some rich, some poor; some Servants, some Masters, some married, some unmarried; some Widows, and some Orphans, and so forth; it is not only convenient, but absolutely needful, that there be cer-

Meetings about
Business.

tain Meetings at certain Places and Times, as may best suit the Conveniencies of such, who may be most particularly concerned in them; where both those that are to take Care may assemble, and those who may need this Care, may come and make known their Necessities, and receive Help, whether by Counsel or Supply, according to their respective Needs. This doth not at all

contradict the Principle of being led inwardly and immediately by the Spirit; else how came the Apostle in that Day of the powerful pouring forth of the Spirit of God, to set apart Men for this Purpose? Sure, this was not to lead them from their inward Guide; yea, on the contrary, it is expressly said, *Acts 6. 3. Look ye out among you seven Men of honest Report, full of the Holy Ghost, and Wisdom, whom we may appoint over this Business.* Sure, they were not to undertake a Business, being full of the Holy Ghost, which might import a Contradiction to their being led by it: So we see it is both fit and suitable to the Apostles Doctrine, to have *Meetings about Business.* Now if any should be so whimsical or conceited, as to scruple their being at set Places and Times, though these be nothing relative to the essential Parts, but only Circumstances, relating

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lating to the Conveniency of our Persons (which we must have regard to, so long as we are clothed with Flesh and Blood: And such Notionists, as are against this godly Care, work far more in their vain Imaginations, than they reduce to Practice; being like unto such of whom the Apostle *James* testified, who content themselves, with saying to the Naked, *be cloathed*; and to the Hungry, *be fed*; while they offer not, in the least, to Minister to them those Things which are needful for cloathing and feeding of them.) Yet shall we not scruple to make it appear, that it is not without very good Ground that we both appoint Places and Times.

And first, as to the *Place*, I say as before, it is with our Bodies we must meet, as well as with our Spirits; and so, of Necessity, we must convey our Bodies unto one Place, that we may speak and act in those Things we meet for: And that must be in some certain Place, where all must know where to find it; having herein a Regard to the Conveniencies and Occasions of such as meet. Were it fit, that those of the Church of *Corinth* should go do their Business at *Antioch*, or the Church of *Jerusalem* at *Rome*? Nay surely, God hath not given us our Reason to no Purpose; but that we should make use of it for his Glory, and the Good of our Brethren yet always in Subjection to his Power and Spirit. And therefore we have Respect to these Things in the appointing of our Meetings, and do it not without a Regard to the Lord, but in a Sense of his Fear. And so the like as to

Convenient
Places to meet
in---

40 *The Anarchy of the Ranters, &c.* Sect. IV.

Times, which is no contradicting of the inward Leading of the Spirit. Else how

And convenient set Times appointed.

came the Apostle to appoint a Time to the *Corinthians* in their Contributions, desiring them, 1 Cor. 16. 2.

To lay by them in Store upon the first Day of the Week; yea, saith he not, that he gave the same Order to the Church of Galatia. I know not how any in Reason can quarrel about set Times for outward Business, it being done in a Subjection to God's Will, as all Things ought to be; or else how can such as so do, but quarrel with the Apostle for this Imposition (at that rate) upon the Churches of *Corinth* and *Galatia*? We appoint no set Times for the Performance of the Worship of God, so as to appoint Men to preach and pray at such and such set Times; though we appoint Times to meet together in the Name of the Lord, that we may feel his Presence, and he may move in and through whom he pleaseth, without Limitation. Which Practice of Meeting together, we are

Reasons for the Continuance of our said Practices.

greatly encouraged to by the Promise of Christ, and our own blessed Experience; and also we are severely prohibited to lay it aside by the

Holy Apostle; and also, on the other Hand, by the sad Experience of such as by Negligence or Prejudice forsake the Assemblies of God's People; upon many of which is already fulfilled, and upon others daily fulfilling the Judgments threatened upon such Transgressors: Read Heb. 10 from Verse 23, to the End, where that Duty is so seriously exhorted to, and the Contempt of

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it reckoned a wilful Sin, almost (if not altogether) unpardonable; yea, a *treading under Foot the Son of God, and a doing Despight to the Spirit of Grace*; which is fulfilled in our Day, and proves the lamentable Fruits of such as have so back-slidden among us. And therefore having so much good and real Ground, for what we do herein, together with the Approbation and Encouragement of Christ, and his Apostles, both by Command and Practice, we can (as that both the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the Foundation and Cap-stone required) faithfully affirm in good Conscience, *That God hath led us by his Spirit, both to appoint Places and Times, where we may see the Faces one of another; and to take Care one for another, provoking one another to Love and good Works.* And our Faith and Confidence herein cannot be staggered by a meer Denial in our Opposers, which no Man of Conscience and Reason will say it ought; seeing the Thing itself hath such a solid and real Cause and Foundation, so good and suitable a Pattern and Example, and that it is constantly confirmed to us, both by the Testimony of God's Spirit in our Hearts, and by the good Fruits and Effects which we daily reap thereby, as a Seal and Confirmation that God is well pleased therewith, and approveth us in it.

Having thus far proceeded to shew that there ought to be Order and Government among the People of God, and that that which we plead for is, That there may be certain Meetings set apart for that *End*; it is next to be considered, *In what Cases, and how far it may extend.*

SECTION V.

In what Cases, and how far this Government extends. And first, as to Outwards and Temporals.

The Occasion of these Meetings about Business.

I Shall begin with that, which gave the first Rise for this Order among the Apostles; and I do verily believe, might have been among the first Occasions that gave the like among us, and that is, *The Care of the Poor; of Widows and Orphans.* Love and Compassion are the great, yea, and the chiefest Marks of Christianity: *Hereby shall it be known, saith Christ, that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another.* And James the Apostle places Religion herein in the first Place; *Pure Religion (saith he) and undefiled before God and the Father is, to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Afflictions, &c.* For this then, as one main End, do we meet together, that Enquiry may be made, if there be any Poor of the Household of Faith that need, that they may be supplied; that the Widows may be taken Care of; that the Orphans and Fatherless may be bred up and educated. Who will be so Unchristian, as to reprove this good Order and Government, and to say it is needless? But if any will thus object, *May not the Spirit lead every one of you to give to them that need? What needs meeting about it, and such Formalities?*

1. To take Care for the poor Widows and Orphans.

I answer,

I answer, The Spirit of God leads us so to do ; what can they say to the contrary ? Nor is this a Practice any ways inconsistent with being inwardly and immediately led by the Spirit ; for the Spirit of God doth now, as well as in the Days of old, lead his People into those Things which are orderly, and of a good Report ; for he is the God of Order, and not of Confusion : And therefore the holy Apostles judged it no Inconsistency with their being led by the Spirit, to appoint *Men full of the Holy Ghost, and of Wisdom, over the Business of the Poor.* Now if to be full of the Holy Ghost be a Qualification needful for this Employment ; surely the Nature of their Employment was not to render this so needful a Qualification useless and ineffectual, as if they were not to be led by it.

The Example
of the Apostles.

Moreover we see, though they were at that Time all filled with the Spirit, yet there was something wanting before this good Order was established. *There was a Murmuring that some Widows were neglected in the daily Ministration ;* and we must not suppose the Apostles went about to remedy this Evil that was creeping into the Church, without the Counsel of God by his Spirit, or that this Remedy they were led to, was stepping into Apostacy ; neither can it be so said of us, we proceeding upon the like Occasion.

If then it be thus needful and suitable to the Gospel, to relieve the Necessities of the Poor, that as there was *no Beggar to be among Israel of old, so far less now ; must there not be*

Contributions
for the Poor.

be

be Meetings to appoint Contributions, in order to the performing these Things? Which is no other, but the giving of a general Intimation what the Needs are, that every one, as God moves their Hearts, and hath prospered them (without Imposition, Force, or Limitation) may give towards these needful Uses. In which Case these Murmurers at our good Order in such Matters, may well think strange at the Apostle: How pressingly! how earnestly doth he reiterate his Desires and Provocations, so to speak, in this Respect to the *Corinthians*, 1 Cor. 16. 2. and the eighth and ninth Chapters of the second Epistle throughout!

Now, though he testifies to them elsewhere, That *they are the Temples of the Holy Ghost, and that the Spirit of God dwells in them*; yet ceaseth he not to intreat and exhort, yea, and to give them certain Orders in this Matter.

Besides all these Reasons, which are sufficient to convince any unprejudicate Man, the secret Approbation of God's Spirit accompanying us in this Thing, together with the Fruits and Effects of it; which Hundreds can witness to, whose Needs have been supplied, and themselves helped through divers Difficulties; and the Testimonies of some already, and of many more Orphans and Fatherless Children, who have found no Want, neither of Father nor Mother, or other Relations, through the tender Love and Care of God's People, in putting them to Trades and Employments, and giving them all needful Education: Which will make it appear, e're this

Fatherless
Children put
Apprentices.

this Age pass away to those that have an Eye to see, that these are not the meer Doings and Orders of Men; but the *Work of him who is appearing in ten Thousands of his Saints, to establish not only Truth, but Mercy and Righteousness in the Earth,*

And for that End therefore in the

second Place this Order reacheth the making up and composing of Differences as to outward Things, which may fall out betwixt Friend and Friend; for such Things may fall

2. To compose Differences in the Church, in outward Matters.

out through the Intricacies of divers Affairs, where neither hath any positive Intention to injure and defraud his Neighbour, as in many Cases might be instanced. Or if thro' the Workings and Temptations of him, whose Work is to beset the Faithful, and People of the Lord, and to endeavour (so far as he can) Strife and Division amongst them, any should so step aside, as to offer to wrong or prejudice his Neighbour; we do boldly aver, as a People gathered together by the Lord, unto the same Faith, and distinguished from all others by our Joint-Testimony and Sufferings, that we have Power and Authority to decide and remove these Things among ourselves, without going to others to seek Redress. And this in itself hath so much Reason, that I cannot tell if any, that are not wholly prejudicate or obstinate, can blame it. For if we be of one Mind concerning Faith and Religion, and that it be our Joint-interest to bring all others unto the same Truth with us, as supposing them to be wrong, what Confidence can we have to think of reclaiming them, if the Truth we profess have not

not such Efficacy, as to reconcile us among ourselves in the Matters of this World: If we be forced to go out to others for Equity and Justice, because we cannot find it among ourselves, how can we expect to invite them to come among us, when such Virtues, as which still accompany the Truth, are necessarily supposed to be wanting? Should we affirm otherwise, it were to destroy the Truth and Faith we have been, and are, in the Lord's Hand, building up: And indeed the Spirit and Practice of such as oppose us herein hath no less Tendency.

Moreover, besides the enforcing and intrinsic Reason of this Thing, we have the Concurrence, Approbation and Comfort of the Apostle's Testimony, 1 Cor. 6. *Dare any of you, having a Matter against another, go to Law before the Unjust, and not before the Saints?* If it be

Objection.

Do you reckon all unjust that are not of you? Think ye all other People void of Justice?

Believers not to go to Law before the Unjust, &c.

I answer, Though the Apostle useth this Expression, I am persuaded he did not reckon all other unjust, that had not received the Christian-Faith. There were, no doubt, more and just Men among the *Heathen*; and therefore the same *Paul* commends the Nobility of *Festus*. He there reckons them *Unjust* in respect of the Saints, or comparatively with them, as such as are not come to the just Principle of God in themselves, to obey it and follow it: And therefore though he accounts them, who are least esteemed in the Church, capable to decide such Matters

yet he supposeth it safer to submit to their Judgment in such Cases, though it were by *taking Wrong, or suffering Wrong*, than to go before others, to the greater Reproach of the Truth. We hope, though many Occasions of the kind have fallen in among us, since we have been a people, none have had just Occasion to decline our Judgment. And though some should suppose themselves to be wronged; yet if they should bring their Matter before others, we might say, as the Apostle saith in the fore-mentioned Chapter, *Ver. 7. This were thereby a Fault in them*, and would evidence a greater Care of some outward Concern, than of the Honour and Interest of Truth; and therefore such as have a tender Regard that way, would rather suffer what, to their Apprehensions, may seem wrong. For in Matters wherein two Parties are opposite in the Case of *Meum* and *Teum*, it is somewhat hard to please both; except where the Power of Truth, and the righteous Judgment thereof reaching to that of God in the Conscience, hath brought to a true Acknowledgement him that hath been mistaken, or in the Wrong; which hath frequently fallen out among us, to the often refreshing and confirming our Souls in the certain Belief, that Christ was fulfilling his Promises among us, *In restoring Judges, as at the first, and Counsellors, as in the Beginning.*

The Case of
Meum and
Teum.

Now, suppose any should be so pettish, or humorous, as not to agree in such Matters to the Judgment of

Going before Unbelievers from the Judgment of the Brethren, is a Dishonour to the Truth.

his

his Brethren, and to go before the Unbelievers (for though I reckon them not such Unbelievers as the *Heathen* of old, because they profess a Faith in God and Christ; yet I may safely say, they are Unbelievers as to these Principles and Doctrines, which we know are the Truth of God; and in that Sense must be Unbelievers as to him, that so appealeth to them from his Brethren.) I say, such as so do, first commit a certain Hurt, and Evil, in staining the Honour and Reputation of the Truth they profess, which ought to be dearer to us than our Lives. And even in that outward Matter, for which they thus do, they run a Hazard, not knowing whether Things shall carry, as they expect: If they lose, they have a double Prejudice; if they gain it is at too dear Rate, even with the Hurt of Truth's Reputation, which their outward Advantage cannot make up. If then it be unlawful *to do Evil, that Good may come of it*, even a *Spiritual Good*; far less is it lawful to do a *Positive Evil*, of so deep a Dye as to bring an evil Report upon the good Land, and give the Uncircumcised an Occasion to rejoice: Out of the uncertain Hope of an outward Gain, it is far better to suffer Loss, as the Apostle very well argues in the Place above-mentioned,

Indeed, if there be any such, who have been, or appear to be of us, as suppose, *There is not a wise Man among us all, nor an honest Man, that is able to judge betwixt his Brethren*; we shall not covet to meddle in their Matter, being perswaded, that either they, or their Cause, is nought.--- Though (Praises to God) among all those that have

have gone from us, either upon one Account or other, I never heard that any were so minded towards us; but the most Part of them having let in the Offence of some Things, or Persons, have had this unanimous Testimony concerning us, that *generally we are an honest and upright-hearted People.*

Apostates
Testimony
concerning us.

But whatever Sense our Enemies, or Apostates have of us, who look askint on the Face of *Truth*, and can see nothing aright in those they love not, or are prejudicate against: This we can say, in the last Place (besides the Reasons and Scripture above declared) that the good Fruits, and Effects, which daily abound to the Household of Faith, in this, as well as the other Parts of the Government the Lord is establishing among us, doth more and more commend it unto us; and confirmeth our Hearts in the certain Belief of that, which we can confidently testify in good Conscience, *That God hath led us hereunto by his Spirit*; and we see the Hand of the Lord herein, which in due Time will yet more appear; that as through our faithful Testimony in the Hand of the Lord that antichristian and apostatized Generation, the NATIONAL MINISTRY, hath received a deadly Blow by our discovering and witnessing against their forced Maintenance, and Tythes, against which we have testified by many cruel sufferings of all Kinds (as our *Chronicles* shall make known to Generations to come) so that their Kingdom, in the Hearts of Thousands, begins to

Priests forced
Maintenance
and Tythes
have receiv'd
a deadly
Blow.

totter and lose its Strength, and shall assuredly fall to the Ground, through *Truth's* prevailing in the Earth ; so on the other Hand do we, by coming to Righteousness and Innocency, weaken the Strength of their Kingdom, who judge for Rewards (as well as such as preach for Hire) and by not ministring Occasion to those, who have heaped up Riches, and lived in Excess, Lust and Riot, by feeding and preying upon the Iniquities and Contentions of the People. For as Truth and Righteousness prevails in the Earth, by our faithful witnessing and keeping to it, the Nations shall come to be eased and disburdened of that

Lawyers, by Tricks and Intricacies, foment Controversies.

deceitful Tribe of *Lawyers* (as well as *Priests*) who by their many Tricks and endless Intricacies, have rendred Justice, in their Method, burdensome to honest Men, and seek not so much to put an End, as to foment

Controversies and Contentions, that

they themselves may be still fed and upheld, and their Trade kept up. Whereas by Truth's Propagation, as many of these Controversies will die by Mens coming to be less contentious ; so when any Difference ariseth, the Saints giving Judgment without Gift or Reward, or running into the Tricks and endless Labyrinths of the Lawyers, will soon compose them. And this is that we are perswaded the Lord is bringing about in our Day, though many do not, and many will not see it ; because it is indeed in a Way different and contrary to Mens Wisdom, who are now despising Christ in his inward Appearance, because of the Meanness of it, as the *Jews* of old

did

did him in his outward : Yet notwithstanding there were some then that did witness, and could not be silent, but must testify that *He was come* ; even so now are there Thousands that can set to their Seal, that he hath now again the *Second time appeared*, and is appearing in *Ten Thousands of his Saints* ; in and among whom (as a first Fruits of many more that shall be gathered) he is restoring the Golden Age, and bringing them into the Holy Order and Government of his own Son, who is ruling, and to rule in the midst of them, setting forth the Counsellors as at the Beginning, and Judges as at First ; and establishing Truth, Mercy, Righteousness and Judgment again in the Earth : *Amen, Hallelujah !*

Christ's restoring the Golden Age.

Thirdly, These Meetings take Care in the Case of Marriages, that all things be clear ; and that there may be nothing done in that Procedure, which afterwards may prove to the Prejudice of Truth, or of the Parties concerned ; which being an outward Thing (that is acknowledged in itself to be lawful) of the greatest Importance a Man or Woman can perform in this World ; and from the sudden, unwary, or disorderly Procedure whereof, very great Snares and Reproaches may be cast both upon the Parties, and the Profession owned by them ; therefore it doth very fitly, among other Things, when it occurs, come to be considered of by the People of God, when met, to take Care to preserve all Things right and savoury in the Household of Faith. We do believe, our Adversaries, that

3. To take Care in the Case of Marriages.

watch for Evil against us, would be glad how promiscuously or disorderly we proceeded in this weighty Matter, that so they might the more boldly accuse us, as Overturers of all human and Christian Order: But God hath not left us without his Counsel and Wisdom in this Thing; nor will he, that any should receive just Occasion against us his People: And therefore in this weighty Concern, we, who can do nothing against the Truth, but all for, and with Regard to the Truth, have divers Testimonies for the Lord. And---

1. Our Testimony against marrying with the Unbelievers.

First, *That we cannot Marry with those that walk not in, and obey not the Truth, as being of another Judgment, or Fellowship; or pretending to it, walk not suitably and answerable thereto.*

2. By the Priest.

Secondly, *Nor can we go to the Hireling-Priests, to uphold their false and usurped Authority, who take upon them to marry People without any Command, or Precedent for it from the Law of God.*

3. In forbidden Degrees.

Lastly, *Nor can we suffer any such kind of Marriages to pass among us, which either as to the Degrees of Consanguinity, or otherwise, in itself is unlawful, or from which there may be any just Reflection cast upon our Way.*

Test. 1. Against Unbelievers.

As to the first Two, they being Matter of Principles received and believed, it is not my Work here to debate them; only since they are received and owned as such (for which we can, and

and have given our sufficient reasons elsewhere, as for our other principles) we ought to care how any, by walking otherwise, bring Reproach upon us ; yet not to pass them wholly by, as to the First. Besides the Testimony of the Spirit of God in our Hearts (which is the original Ground of our Faith in all Things) we have the Testimony of the Apostle *Paul*, 2 *Cor.* 6. 14. *Be ye not unequally yoked together, &c.* Now if any should think, it were much from this Scripture to plead it absolutely unlawful, in any Case, to join in Marriage with any (however otherwise sober) because of their not being one with us in all Things, I shall speak my Judgment. To me it appears so ; and to many more who have obtained Mercy ; *and we think we have the Spirit of God.* But whether it be lawful or not, I can say positively, *It is not expedient,* neither doth it edify, and (as that which is of dangerous Consequence) doth give justly Offence to the Church of Christ : And therefore no true tender Heart will prefer his private Love to the good and Interest of the whole Body.

As for the Second, In that we deny the Priests their assumed Authority and Power to marry, it is that which in no wise we can recede from, nor can we own any in the doing of it ; it being a Part of our Testimony against the Usurpations of that Generation, who never yet, that I ever heard of, could produce any Scripture-proof, or Example for it.---- And seeing none can pretend Conscience in the Matter (for they themselves confess that it is

Test. 2.
Against the
Priests
Usurpations.

no Part of the Effence of Marriage) if any pretending to be among us, should, through Fear, Interest, or Prejudice to the Truth, come under, and bow to, that Image, have we not Reason to deny such slavish and ignoble Spirits, as mind not Truth and its Testimony ?

Test. 3.
Against for-
bidden De-
grees of Con-
fanguinity and
Pre-engage-
ments, &c.

Lastly, Seeing, if any walking with us, or going under the same Name, should *hastily* or *disorderly* go together, either being within the Degrees of Confanguinity, which the Law of God forbids, or that either Party should have been formerly under any Tie or Obligation to others, or any other vast Disproportion, which might bring a just Reflection upon us from our Opposers ; can any blame us for taking Care to prevent these Evils, by appointing that such as so design, *make known their Intentions to the Churches or Assemblies, where they are most known* that if any know just Cause of Hindrance, it may be mentioned, and a timely Lett put to the Hurt, either by stopping it, if they can be brought to *condescend* ; or by refusing to be Witnesses and Concurrers with them in it, if they will not. For we take not upon us to hinder any to marry otherwise than by Advice, or disconcerting ourselves ; neither do we judge, that such as do marry contrary to our Mind, that therefore their Marriage is null and void in itself, or may be dissolved afterwards ; Nay, all our meddling in a holy Care for the Truth. For if the Thing be right, all that we do, is to be Witnesses ; and if otherwise, that we may say for our Vindica-

tion to such as may upbraid us therewith, that we *advised otherwise*, and did no ways concur in the Matter; that so they may bear their own Burden, and the Truth and People of God be cleared.

Now I am confident that our Way herein is so answerable to Reason and Christianity, that none will blame us therefor; except either such, whose irregular and impatient Lusts cannot suffer a *serious and Christian Examination*, and an advised and moderate Procedure; or such, who watching for Evil against us, are sorry we should proceed so *Orderly*, and would rather we should suffer all manner of Irregularities and Abominations, that they might have the more to say against us. But the solid and real Reasons we have for our Way herein, will sufficiently plead for us in the Hearts of all sober Men; and moreover, the Testimony of God's Spirit in our Hearts, doth abundantly confirm us both against the Folly of the one, and the Envy of the other.

Fourthly, There being nothing more needful, than to *preserve Men and Women in Righteousness*, after they are brought into it; and also nothing more certain, than that the great Enemy of Man's Soul seeks daily how he may draw back again, and catch those who have in some Measure escaped his Snares, and known Deliverance from them; therefore do we also meet together, that we may receive an Opportunity to *understand*, if any

What kind of Persons cannot bear the good Order of Truth.

4. Our Care for restoring or separating Offenders.

have fallen under his Temptations, that we may *restore* them again, if possible ; or otherwise *separate* them from US. Surely, if we did not so, we might be justly blamed as such, among whom it were lawful to commit any Evil unreproved ; indeed this were to be guilty of that *Libertinism* which some have falsely accused us of, and which hath been our Care all along, as became the People of God, to avoid : Therefore we have sought always to keep the House clean, by faithfully reprovng and removing, according to the Nature of the Offence, and the Scandal following thereupon ; private Things privately, and public Things publicly. We desire not to propagate Hurt, and defile Peoples Minds, with telling them such Things as tend not to edify ; yet do we not so cover over, or smooth over any Wickedness, as not to deal roundly with the Persons guilty, and causing them to take away the Scandal in their Acknowledgment before all, to whose Knowledge it hath come : Yet judge we not ourselves obliged to *tell that in Gath, or publish that in the Streets of Askelon, which make the Daughters of the Uncircumcised rejoice* ; or strengthen *Atheists* and *Ranters* in their Obdurateness, who feed more upon the Failings of the Saints, than to imitate their true Repentance. And therefore where we find an unfeigning Returning to the Lord, we desire not to remember that which the Lord hath forgotten ; nor yet to throw Offences in the Way of the Weak, that they may stumble upon them.

And therefore I conclude, that our Care as to these Things also is most needful, and a Part of
that

that Order and Government, which the Church of Christ never was, nor can be *without* ; as doth abundantly appear by divers Scriptures heretofore mentioned.

SECTION VI.

How far this Government doth extend in Matters Spiritual, and purely Conscientious.

THUS far I have considered the Order and Government of the Church, as it respects *outward Things* ; and its Authority in condemning or removing such Things, which in themselves are Evil, as being those, which none will readily justify : The Necessity of which Things is such, that few but will acknowledge the Care and Order in these Cases to be *commendable and expedient*.

Now I come to consider the Things of another Kind, which either verily are, or are supposed to be Matters of CONSCIENCE, or at least, wherein People may lay Claim to *Conscience*, in the acting or forbearing of them. In which the great Question is, *How far in such Cases the Church may give positive Orders or Rules ? How far her Authority reacheth, or may be supposed to be binding, and ought to be submitted to ?* For the better clearing and Examination of which, it will be fit to consider,

First, *Whether the Church of Christ* Quest. I.
 hath Power in any Cases that are
 Matters of Conscience, to give a positive Sentence,
and

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and Decision, which may be obligatory upon
believers ?

Quest. II. Secondly, *If so, in what Cases
and Respects she may so do ?*

Quest. III. Thirdly, *Wherein consists the Free-
dom and Liberty of Conscience,
which may be exercised by the Members of the true
Church diversely, without judging one another ?*

And Lastly, *In whom the Power
decisive is, in Case of Contro-
versy, or Contention in such
Matters ?*---Which will also lead us, *To observe
the vast Difference betwixt Us and the Papists,
and others in this particular.*

Quest. I. As to the First, *Whether the Church
of Christ hath Power in any Cases,
that are Matters of Conscience, to
give a positive Sentence and Decision, which may be
obligatory upon Believers.*---

Answer.

Articles of
Faith are
Matters of
Conscience.

I Answer affirmatively, *She hath ;*
and shall prove it from divers Instances, both from Scripture and Reason. For *First, All Principles and Articles of Faith*, which are held doctrinally, are, in Respect to those that believe them, Matters of Conscience. We know the *Papists* do out of Conscience (such as are zealous among them) adore, worship and pray to *Angels, Saints and Images*, yea, and to the *Eucharist*, as judging it to be really Christ Jesus ; and so do others place Conscience in Things that are absolutely wrong : Now I say, we being gathered together into the Belief of certain Prin-
ciples

2. Proof
from Right
Reason.

ciples and Doctrines, without any Constraint or worldly Respect, but by the meer Force of Truth upon our Understanding, and its Power and Influence upon our Hearts; these Principles and Doctrines, and the Practices necessarily depending upon them are, as it were, the *Terms* that have drawn us together, and the * *Bond*, by which we became centred into one *Body* and *Fellowship*, and distinguished from others. Now if any one, or more, so engaged with us, should arise to teach any other Doctrine or Doctrines, contrary to these which were the Ground of our being one; who can deny, but the Body hath Power in such a Case to declare, *This is not according to the Truth we profess; and therefore we pronounce such and such Doctrines to be wrong, with which we cannot have Unity, nor yet any more Spiritual-Fellowship with those that hold them?* And so cut themselves off from being Members, by dissolving the very Bond by which they were linked to the Body. Now this cannot be accounted *Tyranny* and *Oppression*, no more than in a civil Society, if one of the Society shall contradict one or more of the fundamental Articles, upon which the Society was contracted, it cannot be reckoned a Breach or Iniquity in the whole Society to declare, that such Contradictors

* Yet this is not so the Bond, but that we have also a more inward and invisible, to wit, the Life of Righteousness, whereby we also have Unity with the upright Seed in all, even in those, whose Understandings are not yet so enlightened. But to those, who are once enlightened, this is as an outward Bond; and if they suffer themselves to be darkened through Disobedience, which as it does in the outward Bond, so it doth in the inward.

tradictors have done wrong, and forfeited their Right in that Society ; in case, by the original Constitution, the Nature of the Contradiction implies such a Forfeiture, as usually it is ; and will no Doubt hold in religious Mat-

The Disbeliever of the Principles of a Fellowship excludes himself therefrom, and scatters.

ters. As if a Body be gathered into one Fellowship, by the Belief, of certain Principles, he that comes to believe otherwise, naturally scattereth himself ; for that the Cause, that gathered him, is taken away :

And so those that abide constant in declaring the Thing to be so as it is, and in looking upon him, and witnessing of him to others (if need be) to be such, *as he has made himself*, do him no Injury. I shall make the Supposition in the General, and let every People make the Application to themselves, abstracting from us ; and then let Conscience and Reason in every impartial Reader declare, whether or not it doth not hold ? Suppose a People really gathered unto the Belief of the true and certain Principles of the Gospel, if any of these People shall arise and contradict any of those fundamental Truths, whether has not such as stand, good Right to *cast such an one out* from among them, and to pronounce positively, *This is contrary to the Truth we profess and own ; and therefore ought to be rejected, and not received, nor yet he that asserts it as one of us ?* And is not this obligatory upon all the Members, seeing all are concerned in the like Care, as to themselves, to hold the Right and shut out the Wrong ? I cannot tell, if any Man of Reason can well deny this : However, I shall

shall prove it next from the Testimony of the Scripture,

Gal. 1. 8. *But though we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any Man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

1. Proof
from Scrip-
ture.

1 Tim. 1. 19, 20. *Holding Faith and a good Conscience, which some having put away, concerning Faith, have made Shipwreck. Of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

2 John 10. *If there come any unto you, and bring not this Doctrine, receive him not into your House, neither bid him rejoice. (For so the Greek hath it.)*

These Scriptures are so clear and plain in themselves, as to this Purpose, that they need no great Exposition to the unbiaſſed and unprejudicate Reader. For ſeeing it is ſo, that in the true Church there may Men ariſe, and ſpeak perverſe Things, contrary to the Doctrine and Goſpel already received; what is to be the Place of thoſe that hold the pure and ancient Truth? Muſt they look upon theſe perverſe Men ſtill as their Brethren? Muſt they cheriſh them as Fellow-Members, or muſt they judge, condemn and deny them? We muſt not think the Apoſtle wanted Charity, who will have them accuſed; and that gave *Hymenæus* and *Alexander* over to Satan, after that they had departed from the

Hymenæus and Alexander inſtanced.

true

true Faith, that they might learn not to blaspheme. In short, if we must (as our Opposers herein acknowledge) preserve and keep those, that are come to own the Truth, by the same Means they were gathered and brought into it; we must not cease to be plain with them, and tell them, when they are wrong; and by sound Doctrine, both exhort and convince Gain-sayers. If the Apostles of Christ of old, and the Preachers of the everlasting Gospel in this Day, had told all People, however wrong they found them in

A wrong
Charity and
false Love to
cherish in
Error—is—

their Faith and Principles, *Our Charity and Love is such, we dare not judge you, nor separate from you; but let us all live in Love together, and every one enjoy his own Opinion, and all will be well:* How should the

Nations have been; or what Way can they be brought to *Truth and Righteousness*? Would not the *Devil* love this *Doctrine* well, by which *Darkness* and *Ignorance*, Error and Confusion might still continue in the Earth unreprieved, and uncondemned? If it was needful then for the Apostles of Christ in the Days of old to reprove, without sparing to tell the High-Priests, and great Professors among the *Jews*, that they were *stubborn and stiff-necked*, and always resisted the *Holy Ghost*, without being guilty of Imposition and Oppression, or want of true Love and Charity; and also for those Messengers the Lord raised up in this Day, to reprove and cry out against the Hireling-Priests, and to tell the World openly, both Professors and Prophane, that they were in *Darkness and Ignorance, out of the Truth*

Strangers

Strangers and Aliens from the Common-Wealth of Israel; if God has gathered a People, by this Means, into the Belief of one and the same Truth, must not they, if they turn and depart from it, be admonished, reprov'd and condemn'd (yea, rather than those that are not yet come to the Truth) because they crucify afresh unto themselves the Lord of Glory, and put him to open Shame? It seems the Apostle judg'd it very needful they should be so dealt with, *Tit. 1. 10.* when he says, *There are many unruly and vain Talkers and Deceivers, especially they of the Circumcision, WHOSE MOUTHS MUST BE STOPPED, &c.* Were such a Principle to be received or believed, that in the Church of Christ no Man should be separated from, no Man condemn'd or excluded the Fellowship and Communion of the Body, for his Judgment or Opinion in Matters of Faith, then what Blasphemies so horrid, what Heresies so damnable, what Doctrines of Devils, but might harbour itself in the Church of Christ? What need then of sound Doctrine, if no Doctrine make unsound? What need of convincing and exhorting Gain-sayers, if to Gain-say be no Crime? Where should the Unity of the Faith be? Were not this an Inlet to all Manner of Abomination; and to make void the whole Tendency of Christ, and his Apostles Doctrine; and render the Gospel of none Effect; and give a Liberty to the unconstant and giddy Will of Man to innovate, alter and overturn it at his Pleasure? So that from all that is above mentioned,

we

--The Inlet of
all Manner of
Abominations.

we do safely conclude, that where a People are gathered together into the Belief of the Principles and Doctrines of the Gospel of Christ, if any of that People shall go from their Principles, and assert Things false and contrary to what they have already received; such as stand and abide firm in the Faith, have Power, by the Spirit of God, after they have used Christian Endeavours to convince and reclaim them, upon their Obstinacy to separate from such, and to exclude them from their spiritual Fellowship and Communion: For otherwise, if this be denied, farewell to all Christianity, or to the maintaining of any sound Doctrine in the Church of Christ.

But, *Secondly*, Taking it for granted, that the Church of Christ, or Assembly of Believers, may, in some Cases, that are Matter of Conscience, pronounce a positive *Sentence* and *Judgment* without Hazard of Imposition upon the Members, it comes to be enquired; *In what Cases, and how far this Power reacheth?*

Answer. I Answer, *First*, As that which is most clear and undeniable, in the fundamental Principles and Doctrines of Faith, in Case any should offer to teach otherwise, as is above declared and proved. But some may perhaps acknowledge that indeed if any should contradict the known and owned Principles of Truth, and teach otherwise, it were fit to cast out and exclude such; but what judgest thou as to lesser Matters, as in Principles of less Consequence, or in *outward* Ceremonies or Gestures, whether it be fit to press Uniformity in these Things? For Answer to this, it is fit to consider,

First,

First, *The Nature of the Things* Consideration 1.
themselves.

Secondly, *The Spirit and Ground* 2.
they proceed from.

And Thirdly, *The Consequence and* 3.
Tendency of them.

But before I proceed upon these, I affirm, and that according to Truth, that as the Church and Assembly of God's People may, and hath Power to decide by the Spirit of God in Matters fundamental and weighty (without which no Decision nor Decree in whatever Matters is available) so the same Church and Assembly also, in other Matters of less Moment, as to

themselves (yet being needful and expedient with a Respect to the *Circumstance* of Time, Place and other Things that may fall in) may and hath Power by the same Spirit, and

The Decision of Matters of less Moment in the Church obligatory.

not otherwise, being acted, moved and assisted, and led by it thereto, to pronounce a positive Judgment: Which, no Doubt, will be found obligatory upon all such who have a Sense and Feeling of the Mind of the Spirit, though rejected by such as are not watchful, and so are out of the Feeling and Unity of the Life. And this is that which none that own immediate Revelation, or being inwardly led by the Spirit, to be now a Thing expected or dispensed to the Saints, can, without contradicting their own Principle, deny; far less such with whom I have to do in this Matter, who claiming this Privilege to Particulars, saying, *That they being moved to do such and such Things, though contrary to the Mind and Sense*

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of their Brethren, are not to be judged for it ; adding, Why may it not be so, that God hath moved them to it ? Now if this be a sufficient Reason for them to suppose as to *one or two*, I may without Absurdity suppose it as well to the whole Body. And therefore as to the First, to wit,

The Nature of the Things themselves. If it be such a Thing, the

Conf. 1.

Against the
Reproach of
Truth.

doing or not doing whereof, that is, either any Act, or the Forbearance of any, may bring a real Reproach or Ground of Accusation against the Truth professed and owned, and in, and through, which there may a visible Schism and Diffention arise in the Church, by which Truth's Enemies may be gratified, and itself brought into Disesteem ; then it is fit for such, whose Care is to keep all right, to take Inspection in the Matter, to meet together in the Fear of God, to wait for his Counsel, and to speak forth his Mind, according as he shall manifest himself in and among them. And this was the Practice of the primitive Church in the Matter of *Circumcision*. For here lay the Debate: Some thought it not needful to circumcise the *Gentiles* ; others thought it a Thing not to be dispensed with: And no doubt of these (for we must remember, they were not the rebellious *Jews*, but such as had already believed in Christ) there were that did it out of Conscience, as judging Circumcision to be still obligatory. For they said thus, *except ye be circumcised after the Manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.* Now what Course took the Church of *Antioch* in these Cases ? *Acts* 15. 2.

They

They determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them should go unto Jerusalem, unto the Apostles and Elders, about this Question. We must not suppose they wanted the Spirit of God at Antioch to have decided the Matter, neither that these Apostles neglected or went from their inward Guide in undertaking this Journey ; yet we see, they judged it meet in this Matter to have the Advice and Concurrence of the Apostles and Elders, that were at Jerusalem, that they might be all of one Mind in the Matter. For there is no greater Property of the Church of Christ, than pure Unity in the Spirit ; that is, a consenting and Oneness in Judgment, and Practice in Matters of Faith and Worship (which yet admits of different Measures, Growths and Motions, but never contrary and contradictory Ones ; and in these Diversities of Operations, yet still, by the same Spirit, the true Liberty is exercised, as shall be declared hereafter :) Therefore prayeth Christ, That they all may be One, as he and the Father is One. To which Purpose also let these following Scriptures be examined :

Rom. 12. 16. Be of the same Mind one towards another.

1 Cor. 1. 10. Now I beseech you, Brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no Divisions among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment.

Ephes. 5. 21. Submitting yourselves one to another in the Fear of God.

Phil.

The Church at Antioch, sends a Case to Jerusalem, for Advice from the Elders.

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Phil. 2. 2. *Fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind.*

And yet more remarkable is that of the Apostle Paul to the *Philippians*, Chap. 3. Verse 15. *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any Thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*

Verse 16. *Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same Thing.*

Verse 17. *Brethren, be Followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an Example.*

Pretenders and
Innovators
judged by the
Power of God.

So here, though the Apostle grants Forbearance in Things whereto they have not yet attained; yet he concludes they must walk so, as they have him for an Example, and so consequently not contrary, or otherwise. And therefore we conclude that whereas any in the Church of God pretending *Conscience* or *Revelation*, shall arise to teach and practise (however insignificant or small in themselves) whether Principles or Practices, yet if they be contrary to such as are already received as true, and confirmed by God's Spirit in the Hearts of the Saints, and that the introducing of these Things tend to bring Reproach upon the Truth, as such as are not edifying in themselves, and so stumble the Weak; those who have a true and right Discerning, may, in and by the Power of God authorizing them (and no otherwise) condemn and judge such Things: And they so doing it, it will be obligatory

gatory upon all the Members that have a true Sense, because they will feel it to be so, and therefore submit to it. And thus far as to the Nature of the Things themselves.

Secondly, As to the Spirit and Ground they proceed from. Whatsoever Innovation, Difference, or divers Appearance, whether in Doctrine or Practice, proceedeth not from the pure Moving of the Spirit of God, or is not done out of pure Tenderness of Conscience, but either from that, which being puffed up, affecteth Singularity, and there through would be observed, commended and exalted; or from that, which is the Malignity of some Humours and natural Tempers, which will be contradicting without Cause, and secretly begetting of Divisions, Animosities and Emulations, by which the Unity and unfeigned Love of the Brethren is lessened or rent; I say, all Things proceeding from this Root and Spirit, however little they may be supposed to be of themselves, are to be guarded against, withstood and denied, as hurtful to the true Church's Peace, and a Hindrance to the Prosperity of Truth.

Conf. 2.

What proceeds not from the Spirit of God, to be withstood and denied.

If it be said, *How know ye that these Things proceed from that Ground?* Question.

For Answer, I make not here any Application, as to particular Persons or Things; but if it be granted (as it cannot be denied, that there may arise Persons in the true Church, that may do such Things from

Answer.

such a Spirit, though pretending *Conscience* and *Tenderness*; then it must also be acknowledged, that such, to whom God hath given a true Discerning by his Spirit, may and ought to judge such Practices, and the Spirit they come from, and have no Unity with them, which if it be owned in the general, proves the Case, to wit,

The Spirit of Discerning in the Church, judges Transgressors.

That some pretending *Conscience* in Things seeming indifferent, but yet it proceeding in them from a Spirit of *Singularity*, *Emulation*, or *Strife*, those that have received a Discerning thereof from the Lord, may and ought to judge the Transgressors, without being accounted *Imposers*, *Oppressors of Conscience*, or *Inforcers of Uniformity*, contrary to the Mind of Christ; against which the Apostle also guardeth the Churches of old.

Phil. 2. 3, 4. *Let nothing be done through Strife, or vain Glory; but in Lowliness of Mind let each esteem other BETTER THAN THEMSELVES.*

Look not every Man on his own Things; but every Man also on the Things of others.

Now, if it be an Evil to do any Thing out of *Strife*; then such Things that are seen so to be done, are they not to be avoided and forsaken? So that we are confident, our Judgment herein

Pretenders may arise, and must be watched against.

cannot be denied, or reputed erroneous; except it be said, *That none will or can arise in the Church of Christ, pretending such Things from such a Spirit*; which I know not any that will, it being contrary to the express

express Prophecies of the Scripture, and the Experience of the Church in all Ages, as may appear from *Mat. 24. 24. Acts 15. 24.*

1 Tim. 4. 1. 2 Tim. 3. 8. Mark 13.

Discerners of Evils to reprove and warn.

21, 22. 2 Pet. 2. 19. Or on the

other Hand, that those that abide

Faithful, and have a Discerning of

those Evils ought to be silent, and never ought

to reprove and gain-stand them, nor yet warn and

guard others against them; and that it is a Part

of the commendable Unity of the Church of

Christ, to suffer all such Things without taking

Notice of them. I know none will say so; but

if there be any so foolish as to affirm it, let them

consider these Scriptures, *Gal. 2. 4. 1 Tim. 1.*

20. 2 Tim. 2. 24, 25. Tit. 1. 9, 10, 11.

Now if none of these hold true; but, on the

contrary, such Evils have been, and may be found

to creep in among the People of God, and that

such as see them, may and ought to reprove

them; then necessarily the doing so, is neither

Imposition, Force nor Oppression.

As to the *Third, concerning the*

Conf. 3.

Consequence and Tendency of them,

it is mostly included in the two former: For

whatsoever tendeth not to Edifica-

tion, but, on the contrary, to Destruc-

tion, and to beget Discord among

--Sowers of Discord among Brethren to be avoided.

Brethren, is to be avoided: Accord-

ing to that of the Apostle, *Rom. 16.*

17. Now I beseech you Brethren, mark

them which cause Divisions and Offences, con-

trary to the Doctrine which ye have learned, and

avoid them.

--To follow
Peace among
ourselves--

And since there is no greater Mark of the People of God, than to be at Peace among themselves; whatsoever tendeth to break that Bond of Love and Peace, must be testified against. Let it be observed, I speak always of the Church of Christ *indeed*, and deal with such as are of another Mind; not as reckoning only false Churches not to have this Power, but denying it even to the true Church of Christ, as judging it not fit for her so to act, as in Relation to her Members. For though Christ be the *Prince of Peace*, and doth most of all commend Love and Unity to his Disciples; yet I also know he came not to send Peace, but a Sword, that is, in dividing Man from the Lusts and Sins he hath been united to.

--To the
breaking of
the Bands of
the Wicked.

And also it is the Work of his Disciples and Messengers, to break the Bands and Unity of the Wicked, wherein they are banded against God, and his Truth, and the Confederacy of such as stand in Unrighteousness, by inviting and bringing as many as will obey, unto Righteousness; whereby they become disunited and separated from their Companions, with whom they were centred, and at Peace, in the contrary and cursed Nature. And indeed, blessed are they that are sent forth of the Lord to scatter here, that they may gather into the Unity of the Life: And they are blessed that, in this Respect, even for Righteousness Sake, are scattered and separated from their Brethren; that they may come to know the Brother-hood and Fellowship, which is in

in the Light ; from which none ought to scatter, nor to be scattered, but be more and more gathered thereunto. And this leads me to what I proposed in the *third Place*, under this Head, of the *true Churches Power in Matters Spiritual, or purely Conscientious* ; which may be thus objected :

If thou plead so much for an One- Quest. 3.
ness in the smallest Matters, wherein
consisteth the Freedom and Liberty of the Conscience,
which may be exercised by the Members of the true
Church diversely, without judging one another ?

In Answer to this Proposition, I Answer.
 affirm, first in general ; that what-
 soever Things may be supposed to proceed from
 the same Spirit, though diverse in its Appearance,
 tending to the same End of Edification, and
 which in the Tendency of it, layeth not a real
 Ground for Division, or Dissension of Spirit,
 Fellow-Members ought not only to bear one another,
 but strengthen one another in them.

Now the Respects wherein this may be, I can
 describe no better than the Apostle *Paul* doth
 principally in two Places, which therefore will
 be fit to consider at Length for the Opening of
 this Matter ; this being one of the weightiest
 Points pertaining to this Subject. Because, as on
 the one Hand due Forbearance ought to be ex-
 ercised in its right Place ; so on the other, the
 many Devices and false Pretences of the Enemy
 creeping in here, ought to be guarded against.

The first is, 1 *Cor.* 12. from Place 1.
 Verse 4. to 31. thus :

Verse

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Diversities of Gifts, Administrations & Operations from the same Spirit makes no Division.

Verse 4. *Now there are Diversities of Gifts, but the same Spirit.*

Verse 5. *And there are Differences of Administrations, but the same Lord.*

Verse 6. *And there are Diversities of Operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.*

Verse 7. *But the Manifestation of the Spirit is given to every Man to profit withal.*

Verse 8. *For to one is given by the Spirit the Word of Wisdom, to another the Word of Knowledge by the same Spirit.*

Verse 9. *To another Faith by the same Spirit, to another the Gifts of Healing by the same Spirit.*

Verse 10. *To another the Working of Miracles, to another Prophecy, to another Discerning of Spirits, to another divers Kinds of Tongues, to another the Interpretation of Tongues.*

Verse 11. *But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every Man severally, as he will.*

As many Members in one Body concur to the upholding the same.

Verse 12. *For as the Body is One, and hath many Members, and all the Members of that one Body being many, are one Body, so also is Christ.*

Verse 13. *For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

Verse 14. *For the Body is not one Member, but many.*

Verse

Verse 15. *If the Foot shall say, because I am not the Hand, I am not of the Body; is it therefore not of the Body?*

Verse 16. *And if the Ear shall say, because I am not the Eye, I am not of the Body; is it therefore not of the Body?*

Verse 17. *If the whole Body were an Eye, where were the Hearing? If the whole were Hearing, where were the Smelling?*

Verse 18. *But now hath God set the Members every one of them in the Body, as it hath pleased Him.*

Verse 19. *And if they were all one Member, where were the Body?*

Verse 20. *But now are they many Members, yet but one Body.*

Verse 21. *And the Eye cannot say unto the Hand, I have no Need of thee; nor again, the Head unto the Feet, I have no Need of you?*

Verse 22. *Nay, much more those Members of the Body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.*

Verse 23. *And those Members of the Body, which seem to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant Honour, and our uncomely Parts have more abundant Comeliness.*

Verse 24. *For our comely Parts have no Need, but God hath tempered the Body together, having given more abundant Honour to that Part which was weaker:*

Verse 25. *That there should be no Schism in the Body; but that the Members should have the same mind, as of one of another.*

Verse 26. *And whether one Member suffer, all the Members suffer with it; or one Member be honoured, all the Members rejoice with it.*

Verse

Verse 27. *Now ye are the Body of Christ, and Members in particular :*

Verse 28. *And God hath set some in the Church first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, thirdly Teachers, after that Miracles, then Gifts of Healing Helps, Governments, Diversities of Tongues.*

Verse 29. *Are all Apostles ? Are all Prophets ? Are all Teachers ? Are all Workers of Miracles ?*

Verse 30. *Have all the Gifts of Healing ? Do all speak with Tongues ? Do all interpret ?*

Which I would not have set down at large but that there be some so careless (especially in Matters they like not) that they will scarce be at the Pains seriously to read over a Citation only named ; and that also this being presented before the Reader, in the Current of the Discourse, will fix the Nature of my Application the more in

The Sum of
the Premises.

his Understanding. For the Apostle shews here the Variety of the Operations of the divers Members of the Body of Christ, working to one and the same End ; as the divers Members of a Man's Body towards the maintaining and upholding of the whole.

Now these are not placed in contrary Workings, for so they would destroy one another ; and so the Apostle in the ordering of them in three several Kinds proves this. First, *Diversities of Gifts.* Secondly, *Differences of Administrations.* Thirdly, *Diversities of Operations :* And that which is the Bond that keeps the Oneness, here he also mentions, to wit, *The same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God ;* The Apostle names nothing of Contrariety or Opposition. But lest any should

ould be so critical, as to bring in here the school-Distinction of *Contrarium Oppositum*, and *Contradictorium*, I shall not deny, but *Contrariety* or *Opposition*, in the Sense it is sometimes taken, may be found in the Body without *Schism*: as the comely Parts may be said to be *Opposite* or *Contrary* to the Uncomely, or the Left-hand contrary to the Right, or the Foot opposite to the Head, as the uppermost Part to the Undermost; or the *Doing* a Thing is contrary to the *Forbearing* of it; but for that which is acknowledged to be *Propositions*, or *Termini Contradictorii*, that is, *contradictory Propositions*, which are in themselves irreconcilable, whereof one must be still wrong, and that still destroy one another, and work contrary Effects, they are not at all admitted, nor supposed to be in the Body of Christ; as I shall give in one Instance, Verse 8. *To one is given by the Spirit the Word of Wisdom, to another the Word of Knowledge, by the same Spirit.* First, here are two different Gifts, but not contrary. Secondly, There may be something like Contrariety, in the Sense aforementioned, be here supposed; as, some may want this Gift of *Wisdom* and *Knowledge*, and so to have contrary to want (though as to these two, one may be absolutely said to want them; yet all have them not in the same Degree, as a special Gift; though as to some Gifts there may be an absolute Want, as that of *Miracles*, and *Interpretation of Tongues*.) But should I suppose such a Contrariety, or more properly a *Contradiction*, as

No Contrariety in the Body of Christ.

Instances.

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2.

to

to *Wisdom*, to oppose *Folly*, and to *Knowledge*, unto *Ignorance*; this were an Opposition not to be admitted of in the Body, because it were false suppose that to proceed from the same Spirit. And such *Contrarieties* or *Diversities*, as cannot justly be supposed to proceed from the same Spirit of God, which is the Bond that links together

Diversities of
Works and
Operations in
the Body.

cannot be mutually entertained in the Body; so the *Differences* and *Diversities*, which the Apostle admits of, while he speaks largely of this Matter, are, *That none ought to be offended at his Brother, that he hath not the same Work and Office in the Body that he hath; but that every one keep in his own Place, as God hath appointed them; that neither they that are in a higher Place, despise them that are set in a lower; nor they that are set in a lower, grudge and rebel at such as are set higher; but all work in their proper Place, towards the Edification of the Whole.* And that the Apostle intends this, is manifest where he draws to a Conclusion, Verse 27. *Now ye are the Body of Christ, and Members in particular, and God hath set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondly Prophets, &c. and then he follows, Are all Apostles, &c.*

Which the same Paul again confirms, *Ephes. 4. 8, 11.* to the 17th Place. which was the second Place I intended; and shall only mention, for Brevity's Sake, leaving the Reader to consider of it at his Leisure.

This is also held forth by the beloved Disciple John, in his threefold Distinction, 1 John 2. 12,

Of Fathers, young Men, and little Children : And by Peter, 1 Pet. 5. 1. 5. in that of Elders and Younger. The true Liberty then in the Church of Christ is exercised when as one judgeth not another in these different Places ; but live in Love together, all minding the Unity and general Good of the Body, and to work their own Work in their own Place. Also the Forbearance of the Saints is exercised, when as they judge not one another for being found in the different Appearance, either of *Doing* or *Forbearing* ; which may be peculiar to their several Places and Stations in the Body : For that there is, and may be Diversities of Works there, is excellently well expressed by the Apostles, viz.

The true
Liberty in
the Church.

Diversities of
Works ex-
pressed by the
Apostles.

Rom. 12. 3. *For I say through the Grace given unto me, to every Man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think ; but to think soberly according as God hath dealt to every Man the Measure of Faith.*

Verse 4. *For as we have many Members in one Body, and all Members have not the same Office :*

Verse 5. *So we being many, are one Body in Christ, and every one Members one of another.*

Verse 6. *Having then Gifts differing, according to the Grace that is given to us, whether Prophecy, let us prophesy according to the Proportion of Faith.*

Verse 7. *Or ministry, let us wait on our Ministry ; or he that teacheth, on teaching :*

Verse 8. *Or he that exhorteth, on Exhortation : He that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity ; he that*

30 *The Anarchy of the Ranters, &c. Sect. VI.*
that ruleth with Diligence; he that sheweth Mercy
with Chearfulness.

If any then should quarrel with his Brother, for exercising that which belongeth to the Office of the Body Christ hath called him to, and would force him to exercise the same Office he doth, though he be not called to it; here is a Breach of Christian Liberty, and an imposing upon it.

Now all Schisms and Jarrs fall out in this two-fold Respect: Either when any Person or Persons assume another, or an higher Place in the Body, than God will have them to be in, and so exercise an Office, or

go about to perform that, which they ought not to do; or when, as any truly exercising in their Place, which God hath given them, others rise up and judge them, and would draw them from it; both of which Cases have been, and may be supposed to fall out in the Church of Christ. As 1 Cor. 4. 3. 4. where some judged Paul wrongously; 3 John 9. where one exalting himself above his Place, judged whom he ought not. We see then, what Diversities be most usually in the Church of God, consisting in the Difference of the Gift proceeding from the same Spirit; and in the divers Places, that the several Members have in the same Body for the Edification of it; and every one being here in his own Station, his standing therein is his Strength and Perfection; and to be in another, though higher and more eminent, would but weaken and hurt him: And so in this there ought to be a mutual Forbearance, that there may neither be a coveting nor aspiring on the one Hand, nor yet a despising or condemning on

The Breach of
Liberty begets
Jarrs and
Schisms.

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on the other. But besides the Forbearance of this Nature, which is most ordinary and universal (and for the Exercise whereof there is, and will still be a Need, so long as there is any Gathering or Church of Christ upon the Earth) there is a certain Liberty and Forbearance also, that is more particular, and has a Relation to the Circumstance of Times and Places, which will not hold universally; whereof we have the Example of the primitive Church, testified by the Scriptures in two or three Particulars. The first was, *In suffering Circumcision to the Jews for a Time*, and not only so, but also divers others of the legal and ceremonial Purifications and Customs, as may appear, *Acts* 21. Ver. 21, 22, 23, 24, &c. The second was, *In the Observation of certain Days*, *Rom.* 14. 5. And the third, *In the abstaining from Meats*, *1 Cor.* 8. throughout: Here the Apostle perswades to, and recommends a Forbearance, because of the Weakness of some; for he says not any where, nor can it be found in all the Scriptures of the Gospel, that these Things such weak Ones were exercised in, were Things indispensably necessary, or that it had been better for them, they had not been under such Scruples, providing it had been from a Principle of true Clearness, and so of Faith.

Acts of Forbearance in the primitive Church.

Next again, These Acts of Forbearance were done in a Condescension to the Weakness of such, upon whom the antient (and truly deserved in its Season) Veneration of the Law had such a deep Impression, that

Acts of Forbearance or Condescension under the Law.

they could not yet dispense with all its Ceremonies and Customs: And to such the Apostle holds forth a two-fold Forbearance.

^{1.}
To *Jews.* First, A certain Compliance by such Believers, as were gathered out from the *Jews*; though they saw over these Things, yet it was fit they should condescend somewhat to their Countrymen and Brethren, who were weak.

^{2.}
To *Gentiles.* Secondly, The like Forbearance in the *Gentiles*, not to judge them in these Things; but we see, that it was not allowed for such weak Ones to propagate these Scruples, or draw others into them; and that when as any of the Churches of the *Gentiles*, who wanted this Occasion, would have been exercising this Liberty, or pleading for it, the Apostle doth down-rightly condemn it, as I shall make appear in all the three Instances above-mentioned.

First, In that of *Circumcision*,
Gal. 5. 2, 4.
Of Circum-
cision. Behold I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing; Christ is become of none Effect unto you: Whosoever of you are justified by the Law, ye are fallen from Grace.

Can there be any Thing more positive? Might not some here have pretended Tendernefs of Conscience, and have said, *Though the Decree of the Apostles do dispense with Circumcision in me; yet if I find a Scruple in myself, and a Desire to be free out of Tendernefs, why should it be an Evil in me to do it, more than in the Jews that believe?* We

see,

see, there is no Room left here for such Reason-
ing.

Secondly, As to Observations, Gal.

4. 9, 10, 11. Might not they have

Inst. 2. of
Observations
of Days.

answered, *What if we regard a Day to the Lord, must we not then? Are not these thy own Words?* We see that did not hold here, because in them it was *a Returning to the beggarly Elements.*

Thirdly, As to Meats, 1 Tim. 4.

Inst. 3. of
Meats.

Here we see that is accounted a Doctrine of Devils; which in another Respect was *Christian Forbearance*. And therefore now, and that in the general Respect, he gives this Reason, Verse 4. *For every Creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with Thanksgiving of them that believe, and know the Truth.* So we see, that in these particular Things there is great Need of Wariness in the Church of Christ; for that sometimes *Forbearance* under a Pretence of Liberty may be more hurtful than down-right *Judging*. Suppose, if any should arise, and pretend Conscience, and claim a Liberty for *Circumcision*, and the *Purifications of the Law*, whether all Christians would not with one Voice condemn it? And so as to *Days* and *Meats*, how do the Generality of *Protestants* judge it? Though I deny not that there may, and ought to be a mutual *Forbearance* in the Church of Christ in certain such Cases, which may fall in; and a Liberty there is in the Lord, which breaks not the Peace of the true Church; but in such Matters (as I observed at large before) both the Nature of the Things, the

Spirit they come from, and the Occasion from whence, and their Consequence and Tendency is to be carefully observed.

SECTION VII.

Concerning the Power of DECISION.

SEeing, then, it may fall out in the Church of Christ, that both some may assume another Place in the Body than they ought, and others may lay claim to a Liberty, and pretend Conscience in Things they ought not, and that without Question the Wrong is not to be tolerated, but to be testified against, however specious its Appearance may be; and that it must, and ought to be judged: The Question will arise, *Who is the proper Judge of Judges, in whom resideth the Power of deciding this Controversy?* And this is that which I undertook, in the next Place, to treat of, as being the specifick Difference, and distinguishing Property of the Church of Christ from all other antichristian Assemblies and Churches of Man's building and framing.

To give a short, and yet clear and plain Answer to this Proposition: *The only proper Judge of Controversies in the Church, is the Spirit of God and the Power of deciding solely lie in it; as having the only unerring infallible and certain Judgment belonging to it; which Infallibility not necessarily annexed to any Person or Places whatsoever, by Virtue*

Head III.
Proposition 2.

The Spirit of
God the pro-
per Judge of
Controversies
in the Church.

of any Office, Place or Station any one may have, or have had in the Body of Christ. That is to say, that any have Ground to reason thus, *Because I am, or have been such an eminent Member, therefore my Judgment is infallible*; or, *Because we are the greatest Number*; or, that we live in such a noted or famous Place, or the like: Though some of these Reasons may, and ought to have their true Weight in Cases of contradictory Assertions (as shall hereafter be observed) yet not so, as upon which either mainly, or only the infallible Judgment is to be placed; but upon the Spirit, as that which is the firm and unmoveable Foundation.

And now, if I should go on no further, I have said enough to vindicate us from *IMPOSITION*, and from the Tyranny, whether of *Popery*, *Pre-lacy*, or *Presbytery*, or any such like we have, been or may be branded with, as shall after appear.

But to proceed: Herein lies the Difference betwixt the Dispensation of the Law, and the Gospel or New-Covenant; for that of old all Answers were to be received from the Priests in the Tabernacle. For he, that appeared betwixt the Cherubims there, spake forth his Mind to the People; and there were also Families of the Prophets, to whom they resorted for the Answer of the Lord (though sometimes, as a Signification of the further Glory that was to be revealed, it pleased God to reveal his Mind to some, even to them, who were neither Prophets nor Prophets Sons) but, under the Gospel, we are all to be taught of God, that is, none are excluded

Exod. 25. 22.
Numb. 7. 89.
Hos. 12. 10.
Amos 7. 14.
2 Chron. 18. 6.
7. John 6.
45. Heb. 1.
1. 2.

from this Privilege, by not being of the Tribe of *Levi*, or of the Children of the Prophets : Though this Privilege is as truly exercised in some, by assenting and obeying to what God commands and reveals through others (they feeling Unity with it in the Life) as by such, who by the Revelation and Command of God's Spirit hold forth his Will to his People in certain Particulars, which the same Spirit leads and commands them to obey. So that we say, and that with a very good Ground, that it is no way inconsistent with

Judgment infallible proceeds from the Spirit infallible.

this sound and unerring Principle to affirm, That the Judgment of a certain Person or Persons in certain Cases is infallible, or for a certain Person or Persons to give a positive Judgment, and pronounce it as obligatory upon others, because the Foundation and Ground thereof is, not because they are infallible, but because in these Things, and at that Time they were led by the infallible Spirit. And therefore it will not shelter any in this Respect to pretend, *I am not bound to obey the Dictates of fallible Man ; is not this Popery, I not being perswaded in myself?* Because it is not to be disobedient to them, but to the Judgment of Truth through them at such a Time ; and one or more their not being perswaded, may as probably proceed from their being hardned, and being out of their Place, and in an Incapacity to hear the Requirings, as that the Thing is not required of them, which none can deny ; but it may as well be supposed, as the contrary. But for the further clearing of this Matter, before I conclude,

I shall not doubt both to affirm and prove these following *Propositions*.

First, That there never will, nor can be wanting, in Case of Controversy, the Spirit of God, to give Judgment through some or other in the Church of Christ, so long as any Assembly can properly, or in any tolerable Supposition be so termed.

Assert. 1.

Secondly, That God hath ordinarily, in the communicating of his Will under his Gospel, employed such whom he had made use of in gathering of his Church, and in feeding and watching over them; though not excluding others.

Assert. 2.

Thirdly, That their *de Facto*, or effectual Meeting together, and giving a positive Judgment in such Cases, will not import *Tyranny* and *Usurpation*, or an Inconsistency with the universal Privilege that all Christians have to be led by the Spirit; neither will the Pretences of any contradicting them, or refusing to submit upon the Account they see it not, or so, excuse them from being really guilty of disobeying God.

Assert. 3.

For the *First*, to those that believe the Scripture, there will need no other Probation than that of *Matt.*

Assert. 1.
Proved.

28. 20. *And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the World.* And Verse 18. *And the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

Now if the Church of Christ were so destitute of the Spirit of God, that in Case of Difference there were not any found that, by the infallible Spirit, could give a certain Judgment; would not then the Gates

The Infallible Spirit the Gates of Hell cannot prevail against.

of

88 *The Anarchy of the Ranters, &c.* Sect. VII.
of Hell prevail against it? For where Strife and
Division is, and no effectual Way to put an End
to it, there not only the Gates, but the Courts
and inner Chambers of Darkness prevail; for
where Envy and Strife is, there is Confusion,
and every Evil Work.

But that there may be here no Ground of M-
istake or Supposition, that we were annexing *In-*
fallibility to certain Persons, or limiting the Church
to such; I understand not by the Church, every
particular Gathering or Assembly, circumscribed
to any particular Country or City: For I will
not refuse but divers of them, both apart and to-
gether, if not established in God's

The erring
Church or
People--

Power, may err. Nor yet do I lay
the absolute Stress upon a general
Assembly of Persons, as such, pick-
ed and chosen out of every one of

those particular Churches; as if what the Gene-
rality or Plurality of those conclude upon, were
necessarily to be supposed to be the infallible Judg-
ment of Truth: Though to such an Assembly
of Persons truly stated (as they ought) in God's
Power, he hath heretofore revealed his Will in
such Cases; and yet may as the most probable
Way (which shall be spoken of hereafter:) Yet
such as a meer Assembly, is not conclusive, nor
yet do I understand by the Church, every Ga-
thering or Assembly of People, who may hold

---Having
the Form
of Truth.

sound and true Principles, or have
a Form of Truth; for some may
lose the Life and Power of Godli-
ness, who notwithstanding may re-
tain the Form or Notions of Things,

but yet are to be *turned away from*, because in

so far (as I observed before) as Sanctification, to wit, those that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, make the Church, and give the right definition to it: Where that is wholly wanting, the Church of Christ ceaseth to be; and there remains nothing but a Shadow without Substance. Such Assemblies then are like the dead Body, when the Soul is departed, which is no more fit to be conversed with; because it corrupts, and proves noisome to the Living. But by the Church of Christ, I understand all those that truly and really have received and hold the Truth, as it is in Jesus, and are in Measure sanctified, or sanctifying in and by the Power and Virtue thereof working in their inward Parts; and this may be made up of divers distinct *Gatherings* or Churches in several Countries or Nations: I say, so long as these, or any of them retain that, which justly entitles them the Church or Churches of Christ (which they may be truly called) though there may fall out some Differences, Divisions or Schisms among them; as we may see there was no small Dissension in the Church of *Antioch*, and yet it ceased not to be a Church, *Acts* 15. 2. and *1 Cor.* 1. 11.

The true Church.

For it hath been declared unto me of you, my Brethren, that there are Contentions among you; and yet, Verse 2. he entitles them the Church of God, them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus: So long, I say, as they truly retain this Title of the Church of Christ, as being really such, there will never be wanting the certain Judgment of Truth. For which,

The certain Judgment of Truth is never wanting in the Church of Christ.

besides

besides the positive Promise of Christ before-mentioned (which is not without Blasphemy to be called in Question, or doubted of) I shall add these Reasons. That seeing the Church of Christ is his Body, of which he is the Head, it were to make Christ negligent of his Body, who stiles himself the good Shepherd, and hath said, *He will never leave nor forsake his own*; or else (which is worse) it will infer a Possibility of *Error*, or *Mistake* in Christ, in whom as the Head, are the Eyes of the Body, by which it is to be ruled in all Things. *Next*, We never find in all the Scripture since the Gospel, that ever this was wanting; but that God still gave infallible Judgment by his Spirit in some of the Respects above-mentioned. If the Transactions and Controversies of the after Centuries be alledged, I will boldly affirm and prove, That there was never a true Judgment wanting, so long as the Nature and *Essence* of the true Church was retained: If any will needs affirm otherwise, let them shew me where, and I shall answer it. Though I deny not (that after the Mystery of *Iniquity* did begin to work, or had so wrought, first by intermixing, and afterwards by altogether forsaking the Nature of Truth, retaining only the bare Name of the Church) but that there might be some scattered Ones, here and there one in a Nation, and now and then one in an Age, who by the Power and Virtue of the Spirit of Life working in them, might be truly sanctified; yet these were but as Witnesses in Sackcloth, no way sufficient to give these Assemblies, in which they were engrossed, the Appellation

Witnesses in
Sackcloth.

pellation of the Church of Christ, coming no more under Observation by the Generality, nor having, as to them, any more Influence than some little or scarcely discernable Sparks of Fire in many great Heaps and Mountains of Ashes. And thus much to prove, that where there is any Gathering or Assembly, which truly and properly may be called the Church of Christ, the *infallible Judgment* will never be wanting in Matters of Controversy.

Secondly, *That ordinarily God hath, in the Communicating of his Will under his Gospel, employed such whom he had made use of in gathering of his Church, and in feeding and watching over them, though not excluding others.* For, as in a natural Body (to which the Church of Christ is compared) the more substantial and powerful Members do work most effectually; and their Help is most necessary to supply any Defect or Trouble in the Body: So also, if there be Diversities of Gifts in the Church (as is above proved) and some have a greater Measure, and some a lesser, those that have the greater are more capable to do Good, and to help the Body in its Need, than others that are weaker and less powerful. Since there are Strong and Weak, Babes and young Men, *who have overcome the evil One, and in whom the Word of God abideth*, such are more able, when the Enemy besets, to resist (having already overcome) than others who are but yet wrestling, and not Conquerors. Now, every Controversy and Dissention in the Church comes from the Besetments of the Enemy; yet if any of these strong

Assertion 2
proved.

From the Besetments of the Enemy Dissentions arise.

or

or young Men, or powerful Members, go from their Station, it is not denied but that they are as weak as any; and it is pre-supposing their faithfulness in their Place that I thus affirm, and no otherwise. Nor yet do I limit the Lord to this Method: *For in him are all the Treasures both of our Wisdom and Strength*; and the weakest in his Hand are as strong as the strongest, who may now, as well as heretofore, kill a *Goliath* by the Hand of little *David*; yet we see the Lord doth ordinarily make use of the Strong to support the Weak: And indeed, when such as may be termed weak are so made use of, it alters the Nature of their Place, and constitutes them in a higher and more eminent Degree. For though it was little *David*; it was also he that was to be King of *Israel*. Though the Apostles were mean Men among the *Jews*, yet they were such as were to be the Apostles of the Lord of Glory; Instruments to gather the lost Sheep of the House of *Israel*, and to proclaim the acceptable Day of the Lord. And though *Paul* was once accounted the *least of all the Saints, a Child born out of due Time*; yet was he him who was to be the greatest Apostle of the *Gentiles*.

Now then, let us consider whom the Lord made use of in the Affairs of the primitive Church, and through whom he gave forth his infallible Judgment. Did he not begin first by *Peter*? He was the first that spake in the first Meeting they had *Acts* 1. and who first stood up after the pouring forth of the spirit; and who first appeared before the Council of the *Jews*, and spake in Behalf of the Gospel of Christ: Though I am far from calling

calling him (as some do) the Prince of the Apostles; yet I may safely say, he was one of the most *antient* and *eminent*, and to whom Christ, in a Manner somewhat more than ordinary, had recommended the Feeding of his Flock. We see also he was first made use of in preaching to the *Gentiles*, and what Weight his and *James's* Words had in the Contest about Circumcision towards the bringing the Matter to a Conclusion, *Acts* 15. Yet that we may see infallibility was not inseparably annexed to him, he was found blameable in a certain Matter, *Gal.* 2. 11. notwithstanding his Sentence was positively received in many particulars.

So also the Apostle *Paul* argues from his gathering of the Churches of *Corinth* and *Galatia*, that they ought to be Followers of him, and positively concludes in divers Things: And upon this Supposition, exhorts the Churches (both he and *Peter*) in many Passages heretofore mentioned (which I will not, to avoid Repetition, again rehearse) *to obey the Elders that watch for them; to hold such in Reputation, and to submit themselves to them that have addicted themselves to the Ministry of the Saints,* 1 Cor. 16. 15, 16.

Also, we see how the Lord makes use of *John*, his beloved Disciple, to inform and reprove the *Seven Churches of Asia*; and no Doubt *John* (the rest, by the usual Computation, being at that time all removed) was then the most noted and famous Elder alive: And, indeed, I mind not where, under the Gospel, Christ hath used any other Method; but that he always, in revealing his Will, hath made use of such as he himself had before

fore appointed Elders and Officers in his Church; though it be far from us to limit the Lord, so as to exclude any from this Privilege; nor yet, on the other Hand, will the Possibility hereof be a sufficient Warrant to allow every obscure Member to stand up and offer to rule, judge, and condemn the whole Body; nor yet is it without Cause that such an One's Message is jealousd and called in Question, unless it have very great Evidence, and be bottomed upon some very weighty and solid Cause and Foundation. And God doth so furnish those whom he raises up, in a singular Manner, of which (as I said) I mind no Instance in the *New Testament*: And in the *Old* we see, though it was strange that little *David* should oppose himself to the great *Goliath*, yet he had, before that, killed both the Lion and the Bear, which was no less improbable; and which of all is most observable, was, before that Time, by the Appointment of God, and the Hand of the Prophet, anointed King of *Israel*. Compare the 16th and 17th Chapters of the First of *Samuel*.

Assertion 3
proved.

Now, as to the Third, *That any particular Persons, de Facto, or effectually giving out a positive Judgment, is no encroaching nor imposing upon their Brethren's Conscience*, is necessarily included in what is said before; upon which, for further Probation, there will only need this short Reflection: That for any Member or Members, in Obedience to the Lord, to give forth a positive Judgment in the Church of Christ, is their proper Place and Office, they being called to it; and so for them to exercise

exercise that Place in the Body, which the Head moves them to, is not to usurp Authority over their Fellow Members. As, on the other Hand, to submit and obey (it being the Place of some so to do) is not a renouncing a being led by the Spirit, seeing the Spirit leads them so to do: And not to obey, in case the Judgment be according to Truth, and the Spirit lead to it, is, no Doubt, both offensive and sinful. And that all this may be supposed in a Church of Christ without Absurdity, and so establish the above-mentioned Propositions, will appear by a short Review of the former Passages.

If that *Peter* and *James*, their giving a positive Judgment in the Case of Difference in divers Particulars, did not infer them to be *Imposers*, so neither will any so doing now, being led to it by the same Authority: Every one may easily make the Application. And, on the contrary, if for any to have stood up and resisted their Judgment, pretending an Unclearness, or so, and thereby held up the Difference after their Sentence, breaking the Peace and Unity

of the Church (Things being concluded with an *It seemed good to the* Acts 15. 21.

Holy Ghost, and to us) I say, if such would have given just Cause of Offence, and have been cut off, as *Despisers of Dignities* of old, will not the like Case, now occurring, hold the same Conclusion? Now, whether those Propositions do not hold, upon the Principles before laid down and proved, I leave to every judicious and impartial Reader to judge.

Moreover.

Moreover, we see how positive the Apostle Paul is in many Particulars throughout all his Epistles, infomuch as he saith, 2. *Theff. ult. v. 14*, *If any Man obey not our Word by this Epistle, note that Man, and have no Company with him, that he may be ashamed.* And in many more Places, be

Submission
and Obedi-
ence to the
Judgment of
Truth, the
Spirit of
God leads
into.

fore mentioned, where he commands them both to obey him, and several others, who were appointed (no Doubt by the Spirit of God) to be Rulers among them; and yet, who will say, that either the Apostle did more than he ought, in commanding; or they less than they were obliged to,

in submitting? And yet neither were to do any Thing contrary, or more than the Spirit of God in themselves led them to, or allowed them in. And if the Church of God bear any Parity or Proportion now in these Days with what it did of old (as I know no Reason why it should not) the same Things may now be supposed to take Effect that did then, and also be lawfully done upon the like Occasion, proceeding from the same Spirit, and established upon the same Basis and Foundation. And thus much, as to that Part, to shew in whom the Power of Decision is: Which being seriously and impartially considered, is sufficient to clear us from the Tyranny, either of Popery or any other of that Nature, with those that are not either wilfully blind, or very ignorant of Popish Principles, as the judicious Reader may observe. But seeing to manifest that Difference was one of those Things proposed to be considered of, I shall now come to say something of it its in proper Place.

SECTION VIII.

How this Government altogether differeth from the oppressing and persecuting Principality of the Church of Rome, and other Anti-Christian Assemblies.

WHatever Way we understand the *Popish* Principles in this Matter, whether of those that are most devoted to the See of *Rome*, as the Kings of *Spain's* Dominions, and the Princes of *Italy*; the *Jesuits*, and Generality of all those called *religious Orders*, who hold, that *Papa in Cathedra non potest errare, licet absque Concilio*; that is, *That the Pope in his Chair, cannot err, though without a Council*; or of those that are less devoted, who plead this *Infallibility* in the Pope and Council, lawfully convened, who yet, by the more zealous, are reckoned *petty Schismatics*; I say, whatever Way we take them, all those that do profess themselves Members of the *Romish Church*, and are so far such, as to understand their own Principles, do unquestionably acknowledge.

Head III.
Propos. 3
proved.

Principles of
the *Romish*
Church.

First, *That no general Council can be lawfully called, without the Bishop of Rome, as Christ's Vicar, and Peter's Successor, call it.*

I.

Secondly, *That either he himself, or some for him, as his Legates, must be there present, and always preside.*

II.

III. Thirdly, *That the Members having Vote, are made up of Bishops or Presbyters, or Commissioners, from the several Orders, being of the Clergy.*

IV. Fourthly, *That what is concluded on by Plurality of Votes, and agreed to by the Pope and his Legates, must necessarily be supposed to be the Judgment of the infallible Spirit.*

V. Fifthly, *That all the Members of the Church are bound implicitly to receive and believe it, because it proceeds from a Council to be accounted lawful in the Respects above-mentioned, without Regard to the intrinsic or real Truths of the Things prescribed, or bringing them in any Respect to the Test or Examination of the Spirit of God in themselves, or the Scripture's Testimony, or their Agreement or Disagreement with Truths, formerly believed and received; for so much as to prove or try them by Way of Doubt, they reckon a Breach of the first Command; as, on the other Hand, a Matter of Merit, implicitly to receive and believe them, however inconsistent with the Testimony of the Spirit in one's own Heart, Scripture, Truth and Reason.*

VI. Sixthly, *That no man, as a Member of the Church of Christ, in that simple Capacity, unless a Clergyman, or the Ambassador of some King, &c. can be admitted to sit, vote, or give his Judgment.*

VII. Seventhly, *That it is in no Respect to be supposed, that any Members, especially Laicks, whether in a particular City, Country or Nation, may meet concerning any Things relating to the Faith and Worship of the Church, and give, by the Spirit*

Spirit of God any Judgment; but that all such Meetings are to be accounted schismatical and unlawful. And,

Lastly, That the Promise of Infallibility, and the Gates of Hell not prevailing, is necessarily annexed to the Pope and Council, called and authorized in the Manner above expressed. VIII.

Now, if to deny every one of these Propositions, wherein all understanding Men know the Errors and Abuses of the *Romish* Church consist, be to be *Popish*; then indeed may we be supposed to be one with the *Papists* in this Matter, but not otherwise: So that the very mentioning of these Things is sufficient to shew the Difference betwixt us and them. But if any will needs plead our Agreement with them thus;

The Papists affirm an Infallibility of Judgment in the Church of Christ, and so do you; therefore you are one with Papists.

Objection:

I answer, that proves no more our Oneness, in this Matter, than if it should be said, *The Papists plead that God ought to be worshipped, and so do you; therefore ye agree.* Notwithstanding of the vast differences as to that, which is not only known betwixt us and them, but betwixt them and all *Protestants*, who agree more with them in the Matter of Worship than we do.

Answer 1.

Next again, *Infallibility* in the Church (according as we hold it, and I have above defined it) no Man upon our Supposition (or *Hypothesis*) can deny it. For since we first assert, as a Principle, that no Gathering, no Church, nor Assembly of People, however true their Principles, or

Answer 2.

The true Church is led by the Infallible Spirit.

exact their Form be, are to be accounted the Church of Christ, except the *infallible Spirit* lead and guide; what can be the Hazard to say that in such a Church there is still an infallible Judgment? Indeed this is so far from *Popery* that it resolves in a Proposition quite contradictory to them. The *Romanists* say, *That the infallible Spirit always accompanies the outward visible Professors, and is annexed to the eternal Succession of Bishops and Pastors, though ever so vicious*

* For some Popes have been known to deny, or at least to doubt the Truth of the Scriptures as to the History of Christ, and to call in Question the Immortality of the Soul, and the Resurrection.

*as to their Lives: Yea, though perfect * Atheists and Infidels in their private Judgments, yet if outwardly professing the Catholick Faith, and Subjection to the Church, they must be Partakers of the infallible Spirit.*

We say the quite contrary: That where there is either Viciousness of Persons, or Unsoundness of Judgment in the particular Members, these cannot, by Virtue of any outward Call or Succession they have, or any Profession they make, or Authority they may pretend to, so much as claim an Interest in any Part of the Church of Christ, or the *infallible Spirit*.

The infallible Judgment where it is.

So then, if we admit none to be Members of the Church but such as are led and guided by the Spirit, it will be no *Popery*, in the second Place to affirm, that where there is a Company of People so gathered, who are not any longer to retain justly the Name of the Church of Christ than they are led and guided by his Spirit

t. VIII Spirit, or a Church so qualified and designed, there is still an *infallible Judgment*. So that this *Infallibility* is not annexed to the Persons, to the Succession, to the bare visible Profession (though true, which the Church of *Rome* is denied to be) or to any Society, because of its Profession; but singly, and alone to the true, real and effectual Work of *Sanctification* and *Regeneration*, the *New Creature* brought forth in the Heart: And this is the *Spiritual Man*, which the Apostle saith, *judgeth all Things*, 1 Cor. 2. 15. To affirm there is an *Infallibility* here, cannot well be condemned by any; or who so doth, must needs say, the Spirit of God is *fallible*: For we place the *Infallibility* in the *Spirit*, and in the *Power*, not in the *Persons*. And so these are the Degrees we ascend by; Because such and such Men are led by the Spirit of God, and are obedient to the Grace in their Hearts, therefore are they Members and Officers in the Church of Christ. And because they are Members of the Church of Christ in the Respect before declared, therefore there is an *infallible Judgment* among them." We do not say, Because such Men profess the Christian Faith, and have received an outward Ordination, and so are by a lawful Succession formally established Officers in the Church, when they meet together (according to certain Rules above declared) there is an *Infallibility* annexed to their *Conclusions*, and they cannot but decide what is *right*; or rather, what they decide must needs be supposed to be *right*. Who seeth not here a vast Disproportion?

Now we differ herein fundamentally; that is, as to the very Basis and Foundation upon which we build; and that not only from the Church of *Rome*, but also from the Generality of *Protestants* in this Matter. All *Protestants* do acknowledge a general Council to be useful, yea necessary, in the Case of Division or Debate; let us consider the Basis upon which they proceed, and the Strefs they lay upon it.

The Constitution of a Synod, or a general Council among---

First, All jointly, both the *prelatical* and *presbyterial*, will have this Synod or Council to consist of a Convocation of the *Clergy*, chosen and sent from the particular Congregations, with some few *laical Elders*, called together by the civil Magistrate, in case he be one in Judgment with them.

They decide by *Plurality of Votes*. And tho' they assume not an *absolute infallibility*, in that they reckon it possible for them to err, yet do they reckon their Decisions obligatory upon their supposed Consonancy to the Scripture; and how ever do affirm that the Civil Magistrate hath Power to constrain all to submit and obey; or else to punish them either by Death, Banishment, Imprisonment, Confiscation of Goods, or some other corporal pain; even though such be persuaded, and offer to make appear, that the Decisions they refuse, are contrary to the Scriptures.

And *Lastly*, (among the *Papists*) None, tho' otherwise confessed to be a Member of the Church, both knowing and sober, except commisionate in some of the Re-

1. *Papists*.

spec

spects above declared, can be admitted to sit, vote, and give his Judgment.

Any that will be at the Pains to apply this to the Foundation I before laid of the *Infallibility* of Judgment, in that we may account only to be truly called the Church of Christ, will easily see the great Difference betwixt us, which I shall sum up in these particulars :

3. We differ from them both.

First, Do we exclude any Member of the Church of Christ, that may be truly accounted so, from telling his Judgment?

1.

Secondly, Do we say a Man ought to be persecuted in his Outwards for his Dissent in Spirituals?

2.

Thirdly, Do we plead that Decision is to pass conclusive, because of the Plurality of *Votes*?

3.

And much more, which the Readers may observe from what is already mentioned; which, that it may be all more obvious at one *View*, will appear somewhat clearly by this following Figure; which will give the Reader an Opportunity to recollect what lay heretofore more scattered.

I. The ROMANISTS say,

II. The Generality of PROTESTANTS say,

1. That there is an *Infallibility in the Church*; Which *Infallibility* is, when the Pope calls a general Council of Bishops, &c. that whatsoever they conclude

1. That though all Synods and Councils may err; yet such Assemblies are needful for the Edification

West. Conf. of Faith. Chap. 31.

clude and agree upon must needs be the infallible Judgment of the Spirit of God, because of the Promise of Christ, That he would not suffer the Gates of Hell to prevail against his Church.

2. And that the Pope and Council, made up of certain of the Clergy, having one outward Succession, and being lawfully ordained, according to the Canons, are that Church, to which that Promise is made, however wicked or depraved they be; yet this infallible Judgment follows them, as being necessarily annexed to their Office, in which the Authority still stands in its full Strength and Vigour,

3. So that there lies an Obligation upon the whole Body of the Church to obey their Decrees: And such as do not, are not

only

fication of the Church. That such do consist of a Convocation of the Clergy, with some few Laicks particularly chosen. That all others, except those so elected, have not any Right to vote or give Judgment.

2. That such an Assembly so constitute, may ministerially determine Controversies of Faith, Cases of Conscience, Matters of worship, and authoritatively determine the same. The Decision is to be by Plurality of Votes, without any necessary Respect to the inward Holiness or Regeneration of the Persons; if so be they be outwardly called, ordained and invested in such a Place and Capacity, as gives them an Authority to be Members of such an Assembly.

3. What they thus decide (as they judge according to the Scripture) ought to be received with Reverence, and submitted

only certainly damned for their Disobedience, but that it is the Duty of the Civil Magistrate to punish such by Death, Banishment or Imprisonment, &c. in case they refuse.

mitted to: And those that do not, to be punished by the Civil Magistrate by Death, Banishment or Imprisonment, though they declare, and be ready to evidence, that it is because they are not agreeable to the Scripture they refuse such Decrees.

III. The QUAKERS say,

1. That whereas none truly ought, nor can be accounted the Church of Christ, but such as are in a Measure sanctified, or sanctifying, by the Grace of God, and led by his Spirit; nor yet any made Officers in the Church but by the Grace of God, and inward Revelation of his Spirit (not by outward Ordination or Succession) from which none is to be excluded, if so called, whether married, or a Tradesman, or a Servant.

The sanctified
Members.

2. If so be in such a Church there should arise any Difference, there will be an infallible Judgment from the Spirit of God, which may be in a General Assembly; yet not limited to it, as excluding others: And may prove the Judgment of the Plurality; yet not to be decided thereby, as if the Infallibility were placed there, excluding the fewer. In which Meeting or Assembly upon such an Account, there is no Limitation

Their infalli-
ble Judg-
ment—

tation to be of *Persons particularly chosen*; but that all that in a true Sense may be reckoned of the Church, as being sober and weighty, may be present, and give their Judgment.

3. And that the *infallible Judgment* of Truth (which cannot be wanting in such a Church) whether it be given through one or more, ought to be submitted to, not because such Persons give it, but because the Spirit leads so to do; which every one coming to in themselves, will willingly and naturally assent to. And if any, thro' Disobedience or Unclearness, do not all that the Church ought to do, she is to deny them her spiritual Fellowship, in case the Nature of their Disobedience be of that Consequence as may deserve such a Censure; but by no Means, for Matter of Conscience, to molest, trouble, or persecute any in their Outwards.

Who will be at the Pains to compare these three seriously together, I am hopeful will need no further Argument to prove the Objection.

Difference. But if any will further object, *What if it fall out, de Facto, that the Teachers, Elders, or Plurality, do decide* (and from thence will say) *this is like the Church of Rome, and other false Churches?* It will be hard to prove

that to be an *infallible* Mark of a wrong Judgment, as we have not said it is of a right. And indeed to conclude it were so, would necessarily condemn the Church in the Apostles Days, where we see the Teachers and Elders, and so far as we can observe, the greater Number did agree to the *Decision*,

cision, Acts 1. 15. For if the 'Thing be right, and according to Truth, it is so much the better that the Elders and greater Number do agree to it ; and if wrong, their affirming it will not make it right : And truly a Gathering, where the Elders and greater Number are always, or most frequently wrong, and the younger and lesser Number right, is such, as we cannot suppose the true Church of Christ to be. And if any will plead, that there is now no *infallible Judgment* to be expected from the Spirit of God in the Church, it (no doubt) will leave the *Dissenters* as much in the Mist, and at as great a Loss, as those they dissent from ; both being no better than blind Men, hitting at Random, which will turn *Christianity* into *Scepticism*. And though we may acknowledge, that this Uncertainty prevails in the Generality of those called *Churches* ; yet we do firmly believe (for the Reasons above declared, and many more that might be given) That the True Church of Christ has a more solid, stable Foundation ; and being never separated from Christ, her Head, walks in a more certain, steady, and unerring Path.

T H E

CONCLUSION.

A summary
Recollection
of the Whole.

THE Substance then of what is asserted and proved in this Treatise, resolves in these following Particulars.

I. *First*, That in the Church of Christ, when it consists of a visible People (for I speak not here of the Church in the dark Night of Apostacy, that consisted not of any Society visibly united) gathered into the Belief of certain Principles, and united in the joint Performance of the Worship of God, as meeting together, praying, preaching, &c. there is, and still must be, a certain Order and Government.

II. *Secondly*, That this Government, as to the outward Form of it, consists of certain Meetingss appointed principally for that End; yet not so as to exclude Acts of Worship, if the Spirit move thereunto.

III. *Thirdly*, The Object of this Government is two-fold, *outwards* and *inwards*. The *Outwards* relate mainly to the Care of the Poor, of Widows and Fatherless; where

where may be also included Marriages, and the Removing of all Scandals in Things undeniably wrong. The *Inwards* respect an Apostacy, either in Principles or Practices that have a Pretence of *Conscience*, and that either in denying some Truths already received and believed, or asserting new Doctrines that ought not to be received. Which again (to sub-divide) may either be in Things fundamental, and of great Moment; or in Things of less Weight in themselves, yet proceeding from a wrong Spirit, and which in the natural and certain Consequence of them, tend to make Schisms, Divisions, Animosities, and in Sum, to break that Bond of Love and Unity that is so needful to be upheld and established in the Church of Christ. And here come also under this Consideration all Emulations, Strifes, Backbitings, and evil Surmisings.

Fourthly, That in the true Church of Christ (according to the Definition above given of it) there will, in such Cases of Differences and Controversies, still be an *infallible Judgment* from the Spirit of God, either in one or other, few or more. IV.

Fifthly, That this *infallible Judgment* is only, and unalterably, annexed and seated in the Spirit and Power of God; not to any particular Person or Persons, Meeting or Assembly, by Virtue of any settled Ordination, Office, Place or Station, that such may have, or have had in the Church; no Man, Men, nor Meeting V.

Meeting standing, or being invested in any Authority in the Church of Christ, upon other Terms than so long as he or they abide in the living Sense and Unity of the Life in their own Particulars; which whosoever, one or more, inwardly departs from, *ipso Facto*, loses all Authority, Office, or certain discerning, he or they formerly have had, though retaining the true Principles and sound Form, and (may be) not fallen into any gross Practices, as may declare them generally to be thus withered and decayed.

VI. *Sixthly*, That Jesus Christ, under the Gospel, hath ordinarily revealed his Will in such Cases through the Elders and Ministers of the Church, or a General Meeting; whose Testimony is neither to be despised or rejected, without good Cause. Neither is their taking upon them really to decide, any just Ground to charge them with Imposition, or to quarrel with their Judgment; unless it can be proved, that they are decayed, and have lost their Discerning, as above.

VII. *Seventhly*, That to *submit* and *obey* in such Cases, is no detracting from the common Privilege of Christians, to be inwardly led by the Spirit, seeing the Spirit has led some heretofore so to do, and yet may. And that every Pretence of Unclearness is not a sufficient Excuse for Disobedience, seeing that may proceed from Obstinacy, or a Mind prepossessed with Prejudice: Yet say I not any ought to do it

it before they be clear ; and who are every Way right, will not want Clearness in what they ought to do.

And, *lastly*, That these Principles VIII.
are no ways tainted with *Imposition*,
or contrary to true Liberty of Conscience : And
that they fundamentally differ from the Usurpa-
tions both of *Popery*, *Prelacy*, and *Presbytery*,
or any other of that Nature.

ROBERT BARCLAY.

F I N I S.

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right will not want ...

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ROBERT BARCLAY

1875

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A N
E P I S T L E
TO THE
National Meeting
O F
F R I E N D S,
I N
D U B L I N,

Concerning good ORDER and DISCIPLINE in
the CHURCH.

Written by JOSEPH PIKE.

PHILADELPHIA:

Re-printed by JOSEPH CRUKSHANK, 1770.

THE FRIENDS

OF THE

NATIONAL MEETING

OF

THE FRIENDS



DUBLIN

Concerning Good Order and Discipline in
the CHURCH.

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A N

E P I S T L E

T O T H E

NATIONAL MEETING, &c.

My dearly beloved Friends, and Brethren,

HAVING been for some Time under a *deep* and *mournful* Sense of the States of many of the Churches of Christ, a *weighty* Concern came upon my Spirit, to communicate some of those Things to you which came under my Consideration, and I could not be easy until I had given up to do it; and as I foresee what I shall write will be *long*, and the *longer* by *commemorating* the Dealings of the LORD with us in *this* Nation, as well as by writing some Things *new* and *old*: So therefore, I desire you will bear its Length, it being, in Probability, the last time that ever I shall write to you, for I am but *weak* in Body, and *ill* able to write at this Time; and, in all *human Prospect*, not likely to continue long in this World. But however that

may be, Oh ! faith my Soul, that the Lord will be pleased to keep and preserve me *near* to himself to the End, that so in the End of my Time, I may attain to that *everlasting* Rest, that the ELDERS, who have gone before me, are already entred into.

And now, my *dear Friends*, I herewith send you the Salutation of my *endeared* Love in our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, which remains as *fresh* and *fervent* with me now in *old* Age, as in my *Youth*, more especially to you that travel in *Spirit*, and are zealously concerned for the Welfare and Prosperity of SION, you are as *near* and *dear* to me as ever, and I have Unity with you, in the *Covenant* of Love and Life, whether you are *old* or *young*, *rich* or *poor* ; for in this Love it is that we are bound up together in the Bundle of Life, being *baptized by one Spirit into one Body*, and in this Love which proceeds from the Spirit, the true Unity of the Church is kept up and maintained in the *Bond of Peace*, whereby the *whole Body is edified* together in love, which you know is a *stronger* Bond and Tye than all *outward* Laws, Creeds, or Confessions of Faith *without it*.

And besides this Gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, which CHRIST has given us for our Salvation, he has given *additional* Means and Assistances *conducive* to that great End ; thus he has afforded us the HOLY SCRIPTURES for our *Information*, *Edification* and *Comfort*, thro' the Spirit. He has sent us his *Ministers* and *Messengers*, whom he has furnished with the *immediate* Power of his Word : He has gifted ELDERS to *oversee*, *advise* and *admonish* us, and, by his holy Spirit, he has moved upon both Ministers and Elders, to give forth and
leave

leave us *holy Instructions*, for keeping *godly Order* and *Discipline* in the *Churches* of CHRIST, to be as an *Hedge* and *Fence* about us for our *Preservation* (so far as Means can do) in this *Unity* of the *Spirit*, as well as to keep us from the *Inroads* of the *Enemy*, *who goes about continually seeking whom he may devour.* 1 Pet. 5. 8.

Our *gracious LORD* has done all this for us in our *Day* and *Time*, as he did formerly, so that we may truly say with that *holy Prophet Isaiah*, who spoke from the *Mouth* of the *Lord*, saying, *What could have been done more to my Vineyard that I have not done in it.* And Isa. 5. 4. I pray God it may not be said of many of us now as he said to *Israel* then, *viz. Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth Grapes, it brought forth wild Grapes.*

Now, my *dear Friends*, that which bears the greatest *Weight* upon my *Spirit* at this *Time*, is, relating to *godly Order* and *Discipline* in the *Churches* of *Christ*: And tho' I well know that you who have retained your *first Love* to *God*, and have kept your *Habitations* in his *holy Truth*, do not want any *Information* of mine to convince you of the *Necessity* and *Service* thereof; yet as *out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh*, so out of the abundant *Concern* I feel upon my *Spirit* for the *Prosperity* of *Truth*, I beseech you bear with me while I ease my *Mind*, if it but prove of the least benefit to the *Younger* in your *Meeting*, by stirring up the *pure Mind by Way of Remembrance*; for notwithstanding I am very sensible that some of you do want but little stirring up to your *Duty*, respecting *Discipline*, yet I believe many others

others do. Neither do you want to be convinced that our *Women's*, as well as *Men's*, Meetings for Discipline, were *first* set up by the *Movings* of the LORD's Power, through that *worthy* and *faithful* Elder GEORGE FOX ; and also, that the Authority of these Meetings is to be kept up and maintained therein, you are living Witnesses thereof, because the LORD has often owned your Services in them by the *Overshadowings* of his *glorious* Power.

You know also, that in the *first* Institution of these our Men's Meetings, the Members of them were to be *faithful* Men, who were to
Exod. 18. 4. rule and govern for the LORD, Men *fearing* GOD, and *hating* Covetousness, agreeable to those in the Apostles Times, whom the HOLY GHOST had made *Overseers* in the Church of CHRIST ; yet this does not exclude *honest minded* young Men from being admitted to sit in those Meetings *as Learners*, who, growing in Truth, may at length come to have their *spiritual* Senses exercised, so as rightly to discern between *Good* and *Evil*, and *Things that differ*, tho' at first they may not see into Things *so clearly* as the *faithful* Elders did, yet as they grow in Truth, and *follow* them, as the Apostle Paul advises, the
Phil. 3. 15. Lord in due Time will reveal such Things unto them. I can speak this from my own Experience ; likewise, in a more general Way, as there are, and always will be, *different* Degrees of Growth in the Members of the Church of CHRIST, yet as all are growing in Truth, and drawing *one Way*, and aiming at the *same* Thing, namely the Honour of the LORD, and Prosperity of

of his *holy* Truth, there will be a *general* Condescension and Submission to one another, but more especially to *godly* Elders and Overseers ; here the *strong* and *Self-will* of Man is kept out, and the Unity of the *Spirit*, in an *heavenly* Harmony, maintained in those Meetings, as well as among the whole Body, or Church of CHRIST.

And while Things remained in this Order, the true *Watchmen* for CHRIST, those Elders, were good Examples to the Flock themselves ; they diligently watched them, lest the Enemy should steal in upon them ; and when at any Time he made an Appearance, they gave the Alarm to the Flock to beware of the Devourer : Thus, if any Thing did appear *contrary* to Truth, of what Kind soever, then presently (without Delay) those *true Watchmen* did endeavour to put a Stop thereto ; then it was that Things went well in general in the Churches of CHRIST. I could enlarge abundantly upon the good Effects of it, but stop myself, and in a few Words say, *That then the Disorderly were dealt with in due Time, according to the Nature of their Offences, and for their Good : And if they could not be reclaimed, they were set in their Places, Truth cleared, and they made as Examples to others, and then those Examples in some Measure became a Terror to such who were inclined and ready to follow their disorderly Steps, by which Means many, I believe, were deterred therefrom : And thus holy Discipline was kept in its right Channel, and, above all, the LORD was pleased to own those Services with his heavenly Power.*

But alas ! alas ! The State of Things continued in this Condition but a few Years before the Enemy

of all Righteousness made Attempts to break down the *Fence* of Discipline, which had been set up by the Power of GOD, and even prevailed on some, who had been as *leading* Elders and Ministers to be concerned therein (such who once knew better Things) but had departed from their *first* Love to Truth, and Zeal for it; these Men, with their *libertine* Company in our bordering Nation, did rise up against that *Man* of GOD, *G. Fox*, who had been made the Instrument, in the Hand of the LORD, to set up good Order and Discipline; they levelled their Rage and Malice against him in particular, with those who had kept their *first* Love in general: But their *chief* End was to lay waste, and destroy this *good* Order and Discipline, and leave every one to do as they pleased, and would have no Bounds set, with this *plausible* Pretence, that all must be left to the Light in their Consciences, and Friends must wait until they are convinced, that such and such Things were *contrary* to Truth, tho' even many of the Things they went into, the *Light* of CHRIST led the *true* Followers of it out of, and to testify against, in the *Beginning*. This was pleasing Doctrine to *Libertines*; it took with them, and they made use of it, and thereupon went into *wrong* Liberty, as *Height*, *Pride*, *Fashions* of the *World*, *Stiff-neckedness*, *Strife*, *Contention*, and *so unruly*, that they would not submit their Differences to Friends, with many other Things *contrary* to Truth, too long to enumerate; and yet all this under a Pretence of *Christian Liberty*, and that they were not convinced by the *Light* in their Consciences to the contrary. In short, the Rebellion and (Confederacy against good

good Order in the Church) was very great and strong, and in some Places they set up *separate* Meetings; but the LORD brought a *Blast* upon that Spirit, and they came to nothing, as a Body of People; yet notwithstanding this, the Seeds, which they had sown in this Time of *undue* Liberty remained, and still remain amongst many, in some Places, and in this Time it was that some of those Seeds were brought into this Nation, by Examples from them, and in particular *Height* and *Finery* in *Apparel* and *Household Stuff*, with some other Things, of which I am presently to speak.

Tho' I was but a *young Man* then, yet an *Eye* and *Ear* Witness of many of those Things, having been at several of the Meetings in *England*, where in this *libertine* Spirit raised Contention, and then I clearly saw the Tendency thereof, that it would, if possible, lay waste the whole *Heritage* of GOD, and I bore my Testimony against it, as *convenient* Seasons and Opportunities offered.

I have written after this Manner to shew how *good* Order and Discipline was set up and established in a general Way, and what Spirit it was that opposed it then, and I greatly fear the same Spirit is at work now, in this Nation, tho' in a different Appearance, not by their opposing all Discipline in a general Manner as they did, but by breaking of Minutes, and weakening the Hands of the *Faithful*, who are *zealously* concerned in Spirit for the Promotion of Truth, and keeping up the Discipline thereof in its *right* Line.

Now, in opening these Things, I find I shall be still led on in an *historical* Manner, and therefore desire your Patience, and tho' it tend not to the

Infor-

Information of you *faithful* Elders in *Israel*, who know them already, yet it may be to the Younger, by *commemorating* the kind Dealings of the LORD towards us, and stirring up the *pure* Mind in them, and that none of us may be ungrateful to him, for all the Benefits and Labour that he has bestowed upon us.

I have already said that some of the Seeds, which that libertine Spirit had sown, were brought over into this Nation, and particularly that of *Height and Finery in Apparel and Household Furniture, &c.* And by exempling one another, they came to a great Height at last, tho' not to that Degree, as in the other Nation, but we are going fast into them.

Now, upon this Occasion, I must revive the Memory of that *Worthy Elder, William Edmundson*, of this Nation, whose Memory and Labours live, and are sweet to the *upright* in Heart, and who (as most of you well know) was *eminently* instrumental in the Hand of the LORD, not only in a *powerful* Ministry by Word and Doctrine, but also for establishing and maintaining *good* Order and Discipline in the Churches of CHRIST. He *zealously* and with *undaunted* Courage stood up *faithfully* for the LORD and his Cause, and opposed all *false* Liberty in its *first* Appearance, and was, to my *certain* Knowledge, much grieved, when he saw it growing in this Nation, and *faithfully* bore his Testimony against it, *without Favour or Affection*, and tho' he did so, and that many Epistles and Minutes went forth from our Half-year Meeting, against that *libertine* Spirit of *Height, Pride, and other Things*, that had

had grown upon us, yet all did not prove fully effectual, until at last the LORD blest his *unwearied* Endeavours with Success, as a *chief* Instrument in the Hand of GOD, for putting *godly* Discipline in *due* and *close* Execution, by which Means a Stop was put to that Spirit, in *great* Measure, until he was taken from us, and it is now about Thirty Years since the LORD raised up and spirited many *godly* Elders to join with him as one Man, in this Work of *Reformation*, and thereupon Epistles were given forth from Half-years Meetings, which named Abundance of Superfluities, in *Apparel, House Furniture, garnishing of Houses, &c.* with *numerous* other Things relating to *Conversation* and *Behaviour*, and running *greedily* after the Things of this World, too long to enumerate, and which may be seen in those Minutes; and for the more effectual performing this Work, they directed us to chuse out *right spirited* Friends, who had a concern upon them for the Prosperity of Truth, and putting away all those Things that were as *Nuisances* in the Church, to visit every *particular* Family, to *see, inspect* and *advise* accordingly, as they saw Occasion for it.

Now, about this Time, the LORD had also raised a Concern in the Minds of the *faithful* Elders, in most Parts of this Nation, and, with them, had likewise been preparing the Hearts of a *younger* and *middle aged* Generation, to join in this Work, and when those Epistles and Minutes came down to this Province, there was a *general* Assent in the Minds of Friends to comply with the Advices they gave us, as seeing the *Necessity* of it;

it ; and indeed I must confess, I believe that we, in this City of *Cork*, were at that time as much concerned to take the Advice as any in the Nation ; for tho' our Wives and Children dressed pretty plain, yet many of them wore *rich costly* Apparel, tho' of grave Colours, and many of our Houses were furnished with *divers* Superfluities, that were not *agreeable* to the Plainness of Truth, and as Truth (I am satisfied) led into, in the Beginning.

However, so it was that the LORD touched the Hearts of those also, and they joined *Heart and Hand* to the Work, in first cleansing their own Houses and Families from these Things, and after that, as Elders were appointed according to the Advice of the Half-year's Meeting to visit Families, so some of those, the *Younger*, were appointed amongst the rest ; but I well know it was very hard for some of them to give up to it, as thinking the Service too *weighty* for them, but having a Concern upon their Spirits, that the Work should go on, they at last complied, tho' in a Cross to their own Wills, they went in much *Weakness, Fear and Trembling*, but the LORD (I testify) was with and strengthened them in the Service. I write this for the Encouragement of all *honest hearted young Persons*, such who are concerned in Spirit for the Prosperity of Truth, and that think themselves very weak, and thereby are *too backward* in such Services, which the *faithful* Elders in the Church of G O D. shall think them measurably capable of.

It is with me to let the *Younger* know how Friends proceeded in their Visits ; and this I do, in order

order to stir up their Minds by Way of Information and Encouragement. The Visitors chosen *first* met together, and, in the Love of GOD, without *Partiality*, examined one another, how far they stood *clear* themselves, relating to the Things about which they were going to advise others; and, after due Examination proceeded thus: When we came to a Family, we sat down with them, and first waited a while upon the LORD, and then, as it arose in the Minds of any, we principally in the first Place directed them to the Gift of the LORD's Spirit in themselves, as that by which *alone* they could grow in the Truth, and which would lead them in outward Things, agreeable thereto, as to *Conversation, Behaviour and Plainness of Apparel and Speech*, &c. as it led our Elders in the Beginning; and that altho' these Things were very *commendable* in their Places, yet told them they would not do *of themselves*, except the Heart was also right in the Sight of the LORD: And having spoken what was in our Minds, according to the State of the Family we visited (sometimes all together, and sometimes particularly apart, as we saw Occasion for it) we then came to the Minutes from our Half-year's Meeting, and spoke particularly to them.

And this I may tell you of a Truth, that in all those Visits we made in this City at that time we met with no *Opposition* or *Contradiction* in any one Family or particular Person, that I remember, but a *general* Condescension in all, and sometimes a *free and open* Confession of Things that had been amiss, and that in *great* Tenderneſs, with Hopes of Amendment for the future; so that the
Visitors

Visitors and Visited had *great* Satisfaction in that Service ; and this I may further tell you, above all, the L O R D owned our Service, by favouring us with his holy Power therein, so that in some Families, where Things were well, the L O R D overshadowed us by his *living* Presence, and melted us down together, as into one Lump ; *May my Soul never forget those Times, while I have a Day to live in this World !*

Now, after those Visits were over in this City, in convenient Time most of those Visitors here did accompany some other *faithful* Elders in the Province, and they went through it, visiting the Families of Friends, like as they had done in this City, which had much the *same* Effects as here, there being a *general* Condescension to comply with the Desire of the Half-year's Meeting ; and accordingly, in Time, there was (I think I may say) a pretty full and *effectual* Reformation in this Province in outward Things that had been amiss, and which that Meeting desired might be put away and I understood the like Success attended that Service in other Parts of this Nation ; and thus Things stood for several Years, and there was *great* Unity among Friends of this Province in particular, as well as in general throughout the rest of the Kingdom, and the LORD was pleased therewith, which he manifested oftentimes by the *Overflowing* of his *divine Power* in the Meetings of Friends.

I confess, my dear Friends, my writing after this Manner looks rather like an *History* or *Narrative*, than an Epistle, but I desire you will bear with me, it being to magnify the *loving Kindness* of

of the LORD in (rehearsing) his Dealings with us, and for the Information and Encouragement of the *Younger*, that they may follow the Steps of the *worthy Antients*, who have followed Christ, and shun and avoid that *libertine* Spirit, which I fear is now getting in, and has got in again, endeavouring to throw down and lay waste what our *godly* Elders had reared up by the *Power* of the LORD, and from this Fear I am led to query after this Manner.

Are there not some in Being who not only saw those Times of *outward* Reformation, but also heartily joined therein, by putting away out of their Houses and Families those Superfluities in *Fineness of Apparel* and *Household Furniture*, &c? I am satisfied there are. Or are there any who, since that Time, have owned that Concern, and for a Time stood zealous for the Plainness of Truth? I am persuaded there are. And now I query, are there any of late Times, of both Sorts, who have lost that former Zeal, and suffered or permitted some of the *same* or *greater Superfluities in Apparel and Dress to be worn by their Children, and in their Families*; and likewise have suffered or permitted *as fine or finer House Furniture and Garnishing to come into their own Houses, or their Children's*, which I am satisfied they might have prevented, by zealously standing against it; and moreover, have they not connived at others that have gone into such Things? I fear there are such.

Now, by these and the like Means, and by taking Examples from one another, the Seeds of *Height, Pride, and Vanity*, have grown and spread, more (among us) than ever they were before that Time

Time of *Reformation*, to the Wounding and Grieving of the Souls of the upright in Heart. Ah! *Friends, Friends*, I have this to say to you, from the Movings of the Spirit of the LORD in my Heart, how will you answer it in the Day of Account? You, I say, that by your *Easiness* and *Luke-warmness*, have let in those offensive Things upon us again; for as our blessed Lord said, *Whoso shall offend one of these little* Mat. 18. 6.
Ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a Millstone were hanged about his Neck, and that he were drowned in the Depth of the Sea. What will be the Portion of such as these? Therefore let all who are concerned herein repent, and do their *first* Works, before it be *too late*.

Again, besides *Height, Pride and Fashions*, which have (I fear) appeared in too many with a *daring* Face, are there not some that have very much lost, or been ashamed of, the *plain* Language both in *speaking* and *writing*.

I further query, Are there not some who have gone into *undue* Liberty of many Kinds, and others that would be accounted *something*, who have gone into *Contentions, Broils and Differences*, (through a *covetous* and *selfish* Spirit) to the Trouble of the Church? I wish there may not. But I cannot well pass by that *evil* Spirit of *Covetousness* without the following Remark. "It is
 "an abominable Evil in the Sight of the LORD,
 "CHRIST himself severely reprehended it,
 "and cautioned to beware thereof; his *holy* A-
 "postles called it *Idolatry*, and the former Pro-
 "phets cried out against it; as did in like
 "Manner

"Manner that *worthy* Elder *William Edmundson* (herein before mentioned) often warning us to "beware thereof; where it takes *deep* Root in "the Heart, it is a *merciless* devouring Spirit, "not only endeavouring to *devour* others, but "even destroy that *Man himself* who gives Way "thereto, and very little can stand before it, "therefore beware thereof wherever it appears."

And lastly, besides what I have queried above, I here query in a more general Manner, Are there not some who were once very zealous, and stood against all those Things I have mentioned, and if they had kept their Habitations in the LORD's *holy* Truth, might have been made serviceable Instruments in his Hand, and as *bright* Stars in the *Firmament* of his Power, and have joined *Hand in Hand*, and put *Shoulder to Shoulder*, in helping the *Faithful* to keep out those Things; and by which means I am persuaded they would in great Measure have been kept out: I say, Are there not some of those (tho' I hope not many) that now of late Years have been *faulty* in some of those Things themselves, and others who have stood *easy*, and *unconcerned* in Mind, while they have seen and beheld some that were going into them, and instead of helping the zealous and upright in Heart, have rather *clogged* and *weakned* their Hands, by *openly* or *secretly* abetting the cause of the wrong Spirited and the Disorderly, so far as they wereable, and thereby have sometimes fended off the Stroke of Justice and Judgment, in the Way of Discipline (and hindred the Line thereof) from being stretched over such *in due Time*, according to the Nature of their Offences: *For if right Times*

be not observed, right Services may be lost. Whereas, if true Discipline had been duly and rightly executed, it might probably have tended to the *Good of such Offenders themselves*; as well as the *Deterring others* from following their Steps; but, above all, it would have kept up, and established good Order and Discipline in its right line in the Church of CHRIST.

The Breaking or Obstructing this right Line of Discipline has (I fear) produced a *partial* conniving amongst some; for have not the *Easy, Luke-warm, and Indifferent* (who have lost their first Love) daubed with *untempered Mortar*, while they have endeavoured to screen and defend the *Covetous, and Troublers* of the Church? And, on the other Hand, have not such joined with the *luke-warm Daubers*, when they have been justly found Fault withal, and then both Sorts have been easy with the *High, Proud and Libertines*, who also in *their turn* (as they had Opportunity) defended the rest; and thus they have strengthened one another, contrary to that *most solemn Charge* which the Apostle Paul gave to Timothy, in Relation to the Management of the Church Affairs, *viz. I charge thee* (says he) *before GOD, and the LORD JESUS CHRIST and the elect Angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by Partiality*, 1 Tim. v. 21. Such as these are Men for GOD, and *right Judges* for Him. They cannot swerve or be *partial* to any Party, Person, or even nearest Relations, for *Favour, Affection, or worldly Ends*; but as to those who are *easy, luke-warm, partial or cold*, or such that are *Troublers of the Church*

Church of GOD, and who *once knew better Things*, I have this in my Heart to say (if there be any such, as I fear there are) the LORD's Controversy is against them, whether they pretend to be *Teachers* of others, or as *Elders*, and he will dreadfully plead with *such* above others, for they may not only have their *own* blood to answer for, but also the blood of others; therefore repent *in Time*, before it be *too late*. If any one shall think me *too sharp* in what I write, I may tell them it is no pleasing Work to me, for I do it in a Cross to my own Will, but the Day calls for *plain Dealing*, and I must discharge my Conscience.

But as for you, *my dear Friends*, who have retained your *first* Love to GOD, and have stood *zealous* for the LORD and his Truth, whether you are *Ministers* or *Elders*, *young or old*, what I write touches you not; therefore I verily believe you will not be offended at it, for you can discern from what Spirit I write: But notwithstanding I have enumerated so many *hurtful* Things which have prevailed upon some that have been *unwatchful*, yet I hope none will mistake me so far as that thereby I mean the Generality of *Friends*, which I am far from doing; for I believe, and know, that the Lord has still a *faithful* People in this Nation, which I hope he will preserve to the End.

Moreover, I have this in particular to say to you that go *mourning* under the Burden of those Things I have mentioned, be not *too* much discouraged tho' some of your Brethren, that should have helped you, have left you, it was so of old; remember that great Servant of the LORD, *Moses*, how often
he

he was brought into great Straits, by Oppositions he met with from *rebellious Israel*, yet the LORD stood by him, and carried him through to the End. Remember the *Prophets, Elijah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah*, with others, who sometimes thought they stood alone, yet the LORD stood by them, and likewise carried them through. Remember *Paul*, who said to *Timothy* upon Occasion, that *no Man stood with him, and all they of Asia* ^{2 Tim. i. 15.} *turned from him*, and he oftentimes met with great Opposition and Discouragements, yet the LORD stood by him, and carried him through: These may be as Examples and Encouragements to you; therefore slack not your Hands, be not dismayed because of Oppositions and Discouragements you meet withal, stand your Ground, and be zealous for the LORD and his Testimony, and though *you cannot do all you Desire, yet do all you can for him*, and the LORD will stand by you, as he did by them formerly.

Dear Friends, there is another Thing of great Consequence that I have not yet mentioned, which has done abundance of Mischief in the Church, and that is the *Fondness and Indulgence* of many *Parents* to their *Children*, in giving them their own Way and Wills so long, until the Root of Evil has grown and spread itself forth into many *evil Branches*, and at length they have been so alienated from Truth and Friends, that some of them have run quite out. I could enlarge abundantly upon the *evil Effects* of this *fond Indulgence*, but that I have been so large already on other Matters, and that we have so many Minutes against it.

However

However I say, that tho' some godly Parents have discharged their Duty to their Children, which has not had the desired Effect, yet they will be clear of their Blood; but I believe too many have not performed their Duty, by which Neglect their Children have taken wrong Liberty, and fallen into hurtful Things; such Parents must be accountable for it in the Day of the LORD.

I have already spoken of admitting *young* Men into Men's Meetings, but have this to add (not as your Director) but as believing it is what Truth will lead all *right spirited* Friends into in every Quarter, *viz.* To be very careful not to admit of any unless they come under these following Qualifications. First, They should be *sober* and *orderly* in their Conversations. Secondly, they should be *plain* and *exemplary* in their Habit, Apparel and Dressing, likewise *no Tatlers*. And thirdly, that so far as Friends can have a Sense of their Spirits, that they will be *condescending* to godly Elders, and not either in their Words or Spirits likely to oppose them, for I have observed in my time, that some, who have been admitted, without these Qualifications, have in Time proved *great* Troublers of the Church, especially if they have had *fluent* Tongues, which I have beheld in some Places (in my former Travels) *to the Grief of my Soul*.

Another Thing I may observe to you, that we have a *great* many *young* and *middle-aged* Men amongst us, who are *orderly* in their Conversations, and also wish well to the Prosperity of Truth, and yet are (as I may term it) either *indolent*, or too much incumbered in the Things of

of this World, and thereby are backward in coming up into *that Service* for Truth, which otherwise they might be capable of, were their *spiritual* Senses rightly exercised, but by their being *so backward* their Senses grow (as it were) *dull*, for want of Use, and I believe it will become the Duty of *godly Elders* in all the Meetings where such are, to *stir* them up to *mind the Gift* that is in them, or if Need be, even to *rouse* them up to their Duties, as well for their *own Good*, as the *Service* they may have for the Truth.

And now, *dear Friends*, I am come near to an End of this very long Epistle, and tho' I have been *thus large* already, yet *one Thing* more, bears Weight upon my Mind, and I could not be *easy* without touching upon it, which if it shall only tend to a *Caution* of the Younger, my End will be answered; and that is relating to the *close Joining* in Familiarity with any *dark opposite* and *unruly Spirits*; you know we have Minutes against it; and the Apostle *Paul* was of the *same Mind*, when he advised to *have no Company with any who obeyed not their Word*, by that Epistle, 2 Thes. iii. 14. 16. yet in that Case adviseth not to count such an Enemy, but *admonish him as a Brother*, but positively commands, in the Name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, to *withdraw from every Brother that walked disorderly, and not after the Tradition received of the Apostle, &c.* 2 Thes. iii. 6. and likewise to *have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darknes*, but *reprove them*.

Now, if any of those who walk *orderly*, and
are

are in Fellowship with Friends, do contract a very intimate and unnecessary Familiarity with Persons of dark or opposite Spirits, I believe it will have these following *bad* Effects. First, it may rather strengthen them in that Spirit, than help to reclaim them from their *Opposition*. Secondly, It may harden them in *Prejudice* against those that cannot do the same. Thirdly, It may be of *ill Example*, and tend to the further Hurt of others, who are inclined to follow the Steps of the *Unfaithful*. But beyond all this, in my Time I have observed, that even the *Orderly* themselves have been *greatly* hurt, at last some of them *lost* thereby; for having these Opportunities of frequent Conversation together, and by the continual buzzing Things against the *Faithful*, the *Orderly* have in length of time lent an Ear to them, whereby *Surmises* and *Jealousies* have been begotten, then *Hardness* and *Prejudice* have entered; and lastly, a *joining in Confederacy with dark Spirits* against those who have nothing more in their View than the *Honour* of the LORD, and *Good of Souls*; and by this very means (even to my own certain Knowledge) many who (at first) were *orderly* and *honest minded*, were caught in this Snare in the Time of the *Separation*, and some taken in the same in this nation also: Therefore I hope the *Orderly* will observe our Minutes and the Advice and Commands of the Apostles, and if they have occasion (as they may often) to converse with any of the other Sort, to *keep upon their Watch*, and carry towards them, as to
such

*such who are under Admonition, for I am sure
Truth will lead thereto.*

And now I shall conclude, in much brotherly
Love, your dear Friend,

JOSEPH PIKE.

F I N I S.



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